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LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT AS PRACTICED
BY JOHN SINGLETON MOSBY IN THE
AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

RICK GUTWALD, MAJ, USA
B.A., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1971

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ABSTRACT

LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT AS PRACTICED BY JOHN SINGLETON MOSBY IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, by Major Rick Gutwald, USA, 177 pages.

This study is an historical analysis of three Civil War partisan (insurgent) operations conducted by the 43d Battalion, Virginia Cavalry and its Confederate leader, John S. Mosby: the raid on Fairfax Court House, 8-9 March 1863; the attack on Loudoun Heights, 9-10 January 1864; and the Berryville raid, 13 August 1864. Each operation is analyzed by using the following factors: situation and organization; mission and planning; execution of the operation; equipment and logistics; communications, command and control; results; the element of chance; and leadership. In addition, Mosby's background and character are also discussed and analyzed.

Among the many conclusions that could be drawn from this study are: intelligence is paramount to a partisan unit's survival; partisan activities are not always acceptable to its supporting government; Civil War partisan operations are characterized by simple mission orders, hit-and-run tactics, surprise, stealth, speed, deception, and audacity; and partisan operations have the potential to physically and psychologically affect all levels of the enemy's government.

The study concludes that partisan warfare is still viable today and that the U.S. Army should expand its focus to include its use.

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Today's world faces a growing number of political-military struggles aimed at achieving social, ideological, political, economic or psychological objectives. These struggles, which the U. S. Army labels "low intensity conflict" (LIC), range from political protests to the insurgent actions of terrorism and revolution. Although LIC is a relatively new term, insurgency--an element of LIC--is not new. And, while insurgency is not uncommon in history, it has never dominated the world's conflicts or the world's attention more than it does today.

Since World War II, some form of insurgent action has affected nearly every nation of the world, including the United States. The most notable examples include Vietnam, Iran, Lebanon, Granada, and many recent terrorist attacks. As a result of these and other experiences, the U. S. Army's interest in LIC has increased in both the defensive and offensive spectrums. Defensively, the army is interested in methods that preclude or defeat insurgencies which (1) threaten a nation's internal security or (2) threaten the army's own rear areas. The recent establishment of light infantry divisions and special operations forces, such as the Delta Force, are two examples of the army's involvement in defensive LIC.

On the other hand, the army is equally concerned about its participation in offensive LIC. As a result, the army has established several types of offensive units for employment in LIC scenarios. These include airborne units, rangers, special forces, civil affairs, psychological operations, and the units previously mentioned. Having organizations capable of operating in LIC situations is not sufficient, the army must also develop a doctrine to govern their employment.

Perhaps history and, more specifically, this study can assist the army in its doctrinal development. If the army understands what was attempted and accomplished in the past, it will be more prepared for the future.

The focal point for this study is the birthplace of American modern battle, the American Civil War. A quick scan of Civil War references provides numerous historical examples of insurgent operations. One of these references, Modern Guerrilla Warfare, by Franklin M. Osanka, contains an example of Civil War insurgency that eventually provided the research question for this thesis. The article, "Irregular Warfare in Transition," by Lt. Col. Joseph P. Kutger of the U. S. Air Force, mainly concerns the changes of guerrilla warfare during and after World War II. A few paragraphs, however, discuss insurgent or guerrilla actions in the Civil War. The author writes:

A century ahead of their time, the Virginia Confederates of the Civil War stumbled upon one of the secrets of ultramodern war. Their techniques of resistance within occupied territory presaged that of the Russians during World War II. One better appreciates the difficulties faced by [Gen. Ulysses S.] Grant during the Wilderness-Cold Harbor campaign, when it is realized that the Army of the Potomac moved southward almost like a ship at sea--the waters closing in behind it--for any line of supply that extended more than

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SOURCES

Nine figures were adapted from George B. Davis, Leslie J. Perry, and Joseph W. Kirkley, The Official Military Atlas of the Civil War, (New York: The Fairfax Press, 1978).

Figure 1, plate 163.

Figures 2, 3, 5, 8, and 9, plate 74,1.

Figure 6, and 10, plate 27,1.

Figure 7, plate 42,1.

Figure 4 was copied from Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, The Virginia Campaign of 1862 under General Pope, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1895), attached to inside back cover.

a few miles was certain to be ravelled and tattered by the attacks of the irregulars. . . .

Undoubtedly the claims and counterclaims of the successes of the partisan bands [Virginia Confederates] were exaggerated, but their effect and influence was substantial and merit for more attention than is usually given in any history of the Civil War.¹

Today, interrupting lines of supply--or, in present terminology, lines of communication--is still one of the army's major concerns. Defensively, the army wants to preserve its own lines of communication on both the low intensity and the conventional battlefields. Offensively, the army strives to destroy or interrupt the enemy's lines of communication. The Virginia Confederates, as Lt. Col. Kutger pointed out, were very successful in destroying or interrupting the Union's lines of communication. Furthermore, he states that these Confederates also frustrated the Union army in its attempts to sustain the Shenandoah Valley offensive:

That Grant was fully aware of the drain on his capabilities caused by the guerrillas is evident in a message he sent to [Gen. Phillip H.] Sheridan on August 17, 1864. In violation of the then code of international warfare,² Grant instructed: "The families of most of Mosby's men are known, and can be collected. I think they should be taken and kept at Fort McHenry or some secure place, as hostages for the good conduct of Mosby and his men. Where any of Mosby's men are caught hang them without trial."³

¹Joseph P. Kutger, "Irregular Warfare in Transition," in Franklin M. Osanka, Modern Guerrilla Warfare, (New York: Freepress of Glencoe, 1962), pp. 44-46.

²Lt. Col. Kutger is referring to a code of instruction on land warfare adopted by the Union and titled, "Instructions for the Government of the Armies of the United States in the Field." Published in War Department General Orders Number 100 on 24 April 1863, it recognized partisans as legitimate soldiers.

³Ibid, p. 44.

Lt. Col. Kutger then introduces the major cause of Gen Grant's frustration:

John Singleton Mosby had long been a southern guerrilla leader. Formerly an officer in Jeb [James Ewell Brown] Stuart's cavalry, he requested and received a transfer to the guerrillas in 1862. . . . His men had been operating in the Shenandoah Valley and were causing Sheridan substantial trouble.⁴

Lt. Col. Kutger's article suggests that further research into the operations of the Virginia Confederates is appropriate. Therefore, this study concentrates on the operations of John S. Mosby's unit, the 43d Battalion, Virginia Cavalry.⁵

The research question for this study is: What were the techniques that made Mosby and his men successful; and might any of them merit attention today?

This study focuses on:

1. Providing historical information on partisan employment that the army might find useful in present or future offensive operations. Over a century ago, the Confederates employed partisans to conduct "hit-and-run" raids into the rear of the enemy. Today the army employs similar units and the objective is still the same--conduct deep battle in the enemy's rear area in order to destroy isolated units and disrupt lines of communication. Although the techniques identified in this study were employed by 19th century partisans, perhaps some of them are still viable today for use in

⁴Ibid, p. 44.

⁵Mosby's unit was originally known as Mosby's Rangers. After joining the rolls of the regular Confederate forces it became the 43d Battalion, Virginia Cavalry.

low, mid, or high intensity warfare. This study provides a beginning for future research and analysis of how these techniques might be useful today.

2. Establishing a starting point for researchers in determining how to counter partisan operations. If history can provide information on how and why the partisans were successful, then it might also provide information about partisan weaknesses. Security and area defense problems confront today's army commanders in much the same way as they confronted the Union's commanders. Furthermore, with the growing problem of terrorism and guerrilla activity, perhaps information about partisan weaknesses could assist anti-terrorist research.

The terms "guerrilla," "partisan," and "insurgent" are common to low intensity conflict. The term "guerrilla" usually refers to a combatant who engages in harassment and sabotage as a member of an independent unit. An "insurgent" is a person who revolts against civil authority or an established government. "Partisan" refers to a member of a body of detached light troops making forays and harassing the enemy. Although there are differences in the definitions of the previously listed terms, in this study, the terms "guerrilla" and "insurgent" have the same meaning as "partisan."

The following are the major elements of this study:

1. It is comprised of four chapters. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction and provides the purpose and scope of the study. Chapter 2 provides background information including Mosby's life and the creation of his unit. Chapter 3 is divided into three sections, each of which describes and analyzes a major tactical operation of Mosby. The first section focuses on

12. It outlines Mosby's leadership strengths and weaknesses.

13. It does not include:

a. Historical events occurring outside the Civil War.

b. Historical events involving partisan operations of organizations other than the 43d Battalion, Virginia Cavalry.

c. Attempts to prove that Mosby or any of his men created any of the techniques they employed.

d. Attempts to prove that any current U. S. partisan strategy evolved as a direct result of operations of the 43d Battalion.

In conclusion, this study will discuss and analyze three partisan operations in order to identify the techniques and principles that the Virginia partisans used and determine if any of them might be relevant today.

CHAPTER 2

MOSBY'S BACKGROUND

John S. Mosby's battlefield successes would suggest that he had been a schooled soldier, destined for greatness from childhood. However, nothing in Mosby's first twenty-eight years--through his first year in the Civil War--pointed to greatness or even hinted of military success. Nevertheless, some of the reasons for Mosby's success can be traced to his earlier years. For example, many of his strongest character traits surfaced during his childhood and some of these were important factors in his successful operations. Therefore, before analyzing the operations of Mosby's Rangers, Mosby's background and personality should be addressed.

John Singleton Mosby was born 6 December 1833 in Powhatan County, Virginia, approximately twenty miles west of Richmond. His father was Alfred D. Mosby, a university-educated planter and slave holder; and his mother was Virginia, the daughter of Reverend McLauren, an Episcopal minister.¹

Mosby was so frail and sickly that the attending physician predicted an early death from consumption.² Mosby, however, refused to give in to this prediction or to his weak health. Nature made him weak and spare, but it also made him stubborn and antagonistic. As the years passed, he remained

¹Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, p. 15.

²Kevin H. Siepel, Rebel, The Life and Times of John Singleton Mosby (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. xxviii.

physically delicate, a condition that prevented him from competing with or even joining with the other boys in normal play. He not only resented nature's fate, but also resented the other boys who were physically superior. Consequently, Mosby disliked athletics as well as most of the things the other boys liked. He continuously antagonized his peers by taking opposite points of view. His aggressively contrary behavior made him very unpopular with the other boys and often started fights.³ Although he never won, the strength of his resentment and stubbornness always made him willing to fight.

Mosby replaced athletics with books. He avidly read Sir Walter Scott, Washington Irving, and other authors' tales of chivalry, honor, and heroic adventure.⁴ He especially enjoyed the partisan adventures of the Revolutionary War leader, Francis Marion, known as the "Swamp Fox".⁵ These books filled Mosby's head with dreams of heroes and adventures. Unfortunately, his frail body would not permit him to pursue his fantasies and, thereby, increased his frustrations and bitterness. He began to identify more and more with the victims in his adventure books. He pictured himself in a constant struggle of survival against the physically stronger men. And, as he struggled, he recognized his need for an equalizer, something that could turn the tables on his "villains." He found it in the form of firearms. "When the war broke out," Mosby said, "I was glad to see that the little men were a match for the big men through being armed."⁶ And, in the Civil War,

³Stepel, Rebel, p. 22.

⁴Ibid, p. 23.

⁵John S. Mosby, The Memoirs of Colonel John S. Mosby, edited by Charles Wells Russel (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1917), p. 4.

⁶Stepel, Rebel, p. 23.

Mosby's pistols, coupled with his stubborn demeanor and aggressiveness, were more than "a match for the big men."

While Mosby never had any formal military training, two factors in his early life helped him become a cavalry trooper. First, Mosby grew up with horses and rode nearly every weekend. He possessed the horsemanship and riding experience that the cavalry needed. When Mosby joined the cavalry, however, he was considered a sloppy rider; he required considerable extra training; and, while he could remain in the saddle for long periods, some accounts suggest that he never became an expert horseman. Second, he enjoyed shooting and hunting, and appreciated different types of firearms.⁷

Mosby graduated from the Male Academy at Charlotte, Virginia, at the age of sixteen (see map at Figure 1, page 26). His good grades in Latin, Greek, French, algebra, geometry, and other routine courses earned him the right to continue his education.⁸ Thus, in 1850, he entered the University of Virginia as a short, thin, frail-looking youth; one who would never exceed 125 pounds. His size, however, was out of proportion with his character, particularly his moral courage and sense of honor. Unrestrained by physical fear, he met attacks on his honor with the same determined spirit as the heroes in his adventure novels. For instance, in his third year of studies, he shot a fellow student whose slanderous statement had maligned his honor.⁹ Years later, as the leader of the partisans, his desire to avenge his being labeled a horse thief would provide major motivation for his raid on Fairfax Courthouse.

⁷Mosby, Memoirs, p. 5.

⁸Siepel, Rebel, pp. 23-24.

⁹Mosby, Memoirs, pp. 7-9.

In May of 1853, the nineteen-year-old Mosby was convicted of "unlawfully" shooting the fellow student and was sentenced to one year in jail.¹⁰ Ironically, while in jail, Mosby befriended the prosecutor and borrowed a few law books. After serving seven months of his sentence, he was pardoned by the governor of Virginia and began to study law in earnest. Twenty-eight months later, Mosby was admitted to the bar by the same judge who had sent him to jail.¹¹

In 1855, Mosby began practicing law near Charlottesville, Virginia. Two years later, he married Pauline Clarke, the daughter of a state legislator and former congressman. Later, the Mosbys moved to Bristol, Virginia on the Tennessee state line and, by May of 1859, had their first child, May Virginia.¹²

By early 1861, seven states had seceded from the Union; Fort Sumter had fallen; the Virginia State Assembly debated whether to follow her seven sister states; and President Lincoln asked the citizens of Bristol and all Virginia to volunteer to save the Union. Pro-Unionism, however, was very unpopular in Bristol, Virginia. And, as one might expect, the contrary Mosby was pro-Union. Irrespective of his pro-Union sentiments, Mosby later succumbed to a friend's pleas to add his name to the rolls of a new militia organization called the Washington Mounted Rifles--a cavalry company. Mosby attended his first cavalry lesson, hated every minute of it, and

¹⁰Ibid. The student, George Turpin, was a bully who had made a number of uncomplimentary remarks about Mosby. Turpin threatened Mosby with a beating, but as the bully advanced, Mosby fired a gun and wounded him in the neck.

¹¹Siepel, Rebel, pp. 25-30.

¹²Ibid, pp. 5-7.

promised never to return. He could see no good reasons for the repetitious drill or the stern discipline. His negative attitude made the following impression on a friend: "There was nothing about [Mosby] then... to indicate what he was to be--he was rather a slouchy rider, and did not seem to take any interest in military duties.... We all thought he was rather an indifferent soldier."¹³

Two days after Lincoln's request for volunteers, the Virginia State Assembly voted to secede. Shortly thereafter, Mosby made his decision and stayed with the Washington Mounted Rifles. He said, "Virginia went out of the Union by force of arms, and I went with her."¹⁴

From that point on, Mosby attended cavalry drill every day, and, in April, pulled his first detail as camp guard. He later remarked:

For two hours, in a cold wind, I walked my round and was very glad when my relief came and I could go to rest on my pallet of straw. The experience of my first night in camp rather tended to chill my military ardor and was far more distasteful than picketing near the enemy's lines on the Potomac, which I afterwards did in hot and cold weather, very cheerfully; in fact I enjoyed it. The danger of being shot by a rifleman in a thicket, if not attractive, at least kept a vidette [sentinel] awake and watching. At this time I was the frailest and most delicate man in the company, but camp duty was always irksome to me, and I preferred being on the outposts. During the whole time that I served as a private--nearly a year--I only once missed going on picket three times a week. The single exception was when I was disabled one night by my horse falling over a cow lying in the road.¹⁵

Mosby's unit trained in camp until July 1861 when it was ordered to join Gen. Joseph Johnston's Confederate army in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley.

¹³Ibid, pp. 8-11.

¹⁴Mosby, Memoirs, p. 21.

¹⁵Ibid, pp. 22-23.

Mosby later admitted that he had learned much during his training. He finally began to understand the value of discipline and to appreciate his commander, "we learned a good deal from [Capt. Grumble Jones] . . . [and the training] was a good course of discipline for us."¹⁶ Jones had also arranged for each man in Mosby's unit to be outfitted with a Sharps carbine and a sabre. Mosby was honored that the Confederacy provided the carbine because arms were scarce. The sabre, however, was a different matter. Mosby could see no real use for the sabre except for holding meat over a fire to cook. He dragged the sabre with him throughout his first year of service, but when he became a commander, he discarded it. Mosby later boasted to be the first commander to do so.¹⁷

Upon its arrival in the Shenandoah Valley, the Washington Mounted Rifles joined the 1st Virginia Cavalry Regiment, commanded by Col. JEB Stuart. Two days later, Mosby experienced his first tactical operation. His unit was scouting in the Valley toward Martinsburg in western Virginia, when they surprised two Union soldiers foraging.¹⁸ The two soldiers ran, but Mosby's unit overtook them. Mosby received a canteen as booty and he later remarked that it was the first canteen he had ever seen, so he treasured it highly.¹⁹

Stuart was responsible for taking experienced horsemen and turning them into effective cavalry troopers. Therefore, he began training his new recruits by keeping them in the saddle for most of the week of 20 July, and,

¹⁶Ibid, p. 27.

¹⁷Ibid, p. xi.

¹⁸The region of western Virginia separated from the State of Virginia in 1861 and was admitted to the Union as the State of West Virginia in 1863

¹⁹Ibid, p. 32.

in the last thirty-six hours of that week, pushed them 60 miles to get to Manassas, Virginia. Although Mosby was in a forward position where he could see most of the battle, he did not get into the first battle of Manassas as soon as he would have liked because the Washington Rifles remained in reserve.²⁰ However, when the Union lines finally shattered, Mosby's unit was called upon to pursue the fleeing enemy. They chased the defeated force for over six miles until darkness covered the Union retreat. Mosby's first taste of battle provided two lessons. First, he observed and survived the carnage of the first major battle of the war. Second, he witnessed how quickly the cavalry can terrorize the enemy's exposed flanks and rear.

The loss at Manassas severely demoralized the Union. The army had panicked and fled across the Potomac, and the citizens of Washington D.C. feared a Confederate invasion. Their fear was so strong that Gen. George B. McClellan, the Union's new commanding general, spent the remainder of the summer and early fall organizing and maintaining the defenses around the nation's capital. The victorious Confederate army, however, was not quick enough to pursue the Union forces into Washington. After the Union army had vacated Virginia, Stuart's troops pushed on to the Potomac where they established the forward edge of the Confederacy. Mosby now rode picket as he preferred it--along the Potomac and closer to the enemy. The pause in the war also provided Mosby with time for reading military works such as Noland's Employment of Cavalry, Napoleon's Maxims, and some books on partisan warfare.²¹ Mosby apparently gained considerable knowledge from

²⁰The first battle of Manassas was also known as the first battle of Bull Run.

²¹Siepel, Rebel, p. 42.

the study of military history. Letters to his wife and his memoirs often referred to vignettes from other wars. Evidently, Mosby learned from his own battlefield experiences and from his readings as well.

In January 1862, Mosby was one of only two men in his company to volunteer for reenlistment without first receiving a furlough. Previously, he was only one of two men who did not refuse to wear uniforms (procured by Grumble Jones) made of prison cloth.²² This probably had some bearing on why he was soon given permission to visit his family, and why the new regimental commander, Col. Grumble Jones (Stuart had been promoted out of the position), asked Mosby to become the regimental adjutant. Mosby accepted his commander's invitation and, when he returned from furlough, he faced the new horror of having to conduct drill and ceremonies as an officer.²³

The month of March began with Mosby still trying to learn his duties as regimental adjutant and McClellan preparing his army for the advance on Richmond. On 9 March 1862, Gen. Johnston started to move his Confederate army southward from Manassas to protect Richmond from McClellan's attack. As Johnston's army withdrew, the Federal cavalry mounted probes to monitor the progress of the Confederate army's withdrawal. Consequently, Brig. Gen. Stuart's cavalry was assigned to guard Johnston's rear, not knowing if the probing forces were the advance of McClellan's army or just isolated bodies. The retreating Confederates did not know that McClellan's main force, in Alexandria, Virginia, intended to move down the Potomac River by ship to the Virginia Peninsula.

²²Ibid, p. 17.

²³Ibid, p. 44-45, 48.

Mosby volunteered to ride behind the lines to find out which forces were facing Stuart's cavalry. Mosby and three other men forded the icy Cedar Run, carefully worked their way around the Union force, and discovered it to be an isolated body. They also noticed that the enemy would be highly vulnerable to an attack from the numerically superior Confederates. Mosby and his companions rode all night, recrossed the river, and reported their findings to Stuart. Overjoyed at the report, Stuart offered Mosby a reward for what he had done. The only reward Mosby wanted was the opportunity to do the same thing again. Acting on Mosby's report, Stuart's cavalry immediately attacked across the river and began collecting prisoners. Stuart's report of the operation singled out Adjutant Mosby and a companion, recommending promotion for both.²⁴ This is the first instance of a heroic deed by Mosby. More important, it demonstrates Mosby's understanding of enemy lines of communications and vulnerabilities.

In late April 1862, the Confederate Congress passed an act reorganizing the army along democratic lines: officers were to be elected by the men of the unit. Mosby's unit, by popular vote, elected Fitzhugh Lee as its commander. Unfortunately, as adjutant, the cocky Mosby had previously delighted in antagonizing the regimental executive officer, Lt. Col. Fitzhugh Lee. Therefore, Mosby tendered his resignation as adjutant and Lee quickly accepted it. Mosby, a private once again, accepted Stuart's invitation to become a courier.²⁵

By May, McClellan's Union army of 110,000 men had inched up the peninsula toward Richmond, Maj. Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's

²⁴Ibid, p. 51-52.

²⁵Mosby, Memoirs, p. 109.

Confederate army threatened Washington D.C., and Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee had replaced the wounded Gen. Joseph Johnston as the commander of the army defending Richmond. Because of the closeness of the two opposing armies, Stuart's cavalry had little to do, and Mosby was bored, homesick, and looking for opportunities to become an officer in other units.²⁶

In the middle of this boredom, Stuart asked Mosby about the possibility of probing McClellan's right flank to get information to support "Stonewall" Jackson's attack from the north. Mosby dashed off with four men to get the information that Stuart sought. After a few days, Mosby returned and reported what he had seen; adding that he had penetrated McClellan's lines so easily that a larger force could repeat the act and do extensive damage. Stuart listened intently, and when Mosby finished, went to Lee with a proposal based on Mosby's observations. On 12 June 1862, Stuart began his celebrated ride around McClellan with Mosby and two other men riding in advance. In four days, the Confederate cavalry rode a circle of over one hundred miles through McClellan's forces--pillaging Union camps, burning equipment and boats, taking prisoners, and virtually ignoring the fact that any major Union forces were nearby. The daring operation shook the confidence of the Union forces, confused McClellan, and damaged his reputation as a commander. It also put Stuart's name on the lips of every Confederate and caused Stuart to seek a commission for his favorite scout, John S. Mosby. In this operation, Mosby demonstrated his boldness, his ability to scout, and his ability to recognize enemy weaknesses.

²⁶Siepel, Rebel, p. 54.

The month of July began with a new general in command of the Union's Army of the Potomac, Gen. John Pope. Pope had claimed to be a man who never rested. Pope also boasted that he would move so relentlessly against the Confederates that he would not have time to take care of his own rear. And, as a result, his dispatches would be initiated from his saddle instead of his headquarters.²⁷ Mosby recognized Pope's vulnerability to partisan activities and approached Stuart with a proposition to "take care of his [Pope's] rear and communications for him."²⁸ Stuart understood and agreed with Mosby's reasoning. Unfortunately, Stuart felt he could not afford to give up the men Mosby needed for his partisan experiment. Therefore, Stuart sent him to "Stonewall" Jackson, suggesting that Mosby might be able to persuade Jackson to give him the men.

On 19 July, Mosby carried a letter of introduction from Stuart (describing the bearer as "bold, daring, intelligent, and discreet") to Jackson.²⁹ Halfway to his destination, Mosby decided to take the train so he could stop en route and visit his family. He sent his horse and equipment ahead with a companion and waited for the train. As he laid down to rest, he was surprised and captured by a detachment of Union cavalry. The capturing officer's official report shows that Mosby gave his name as Capt. Mosby (he was not a captain). He probably did so to insure he received better treatment. On the other hand, he may have done so as part of a fantasy. The capture report goes on to describe the impression that Mosby made:

²⁷Ibid, pp. 57-58.

²⁸Mosby, Memoirs, p. 125.

²⁹The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (128 vols., 1880-1901), series 1, vol. LI, pt II, p. 594. (Cited hereafter as OR.)

By his sprightly appearance and conversation he attracted considerable attention. He is slight but well formed; has a keen blue eye and a blond complexion, and displays no small amount of Southern bravado in his dress and manners. His gray plush hat is surmounted by a waving plume, which he tosses, as he speaks, in real Prussian style. He had a letter in his possession from General Stuart commending him to the kind regards of General Jackson.³⁰

Mosby's capture must have disappointed and embarrassed him. First of all, he had everything going his way from the successful ride around McClellan, to Stuart's letter of recommendation, to the possibility of starting a partisan unit. Second, his capture must have crushed his flamboyant and arrogant self-esteem. Not to mention that he was probably ridiculed by his captors for being captured in his sleep. One can only imagine how hard he must have searched for a way to recover his pride and escape his predicament.

Fortunately, fate was on Mosby's side. He was taken to the Old Capitol Prison in Washington and ten days later became part of the war's first prisoner exchange. He was taken down the Potomac to Fort Monroe, Virginia, where he would have to wait four days before moving up the James River to the place of exchange. While he waited, he noticed large numbers of transports and Union soldiers. He learned that these were Gen. Ambrose Burnside's troops, who had just arrived from North Carolina. Mosby believed McClellan would advance on Richmond if Burnside's troops were to reinforce him in the Virginia Peninsula. On the other hand, if Burnside's troops sailed up the Chesapeake, it would mean they were destined to reinforce Pope. Mosby realized that Gen. Lee must have this important information. He also

³⁰OR, vol. XXI, pt. III, p. 490.

realized that he had found an opportunity to avenge his capture. He contacted a Confederate sympathizer who secretly told Mosby that Burnside's troops were destined to be moved north. Therefore, immediately after his exchange as prisoner, Mosby hurried to Gen. Lee's headquarters, where he personally informed Lee of the enemy's intentions. As a result, Lee ordered Jackson to attack Pope's forces at Cedar Mountain before Burnside's troops could arrive. Once again, Mosby demonstrated his abilities to gather intelligence and determine what was tactically important.

Although he scouted for Stuart and Jackson, Mosby saw little action from August to December 1862. Nevertheless, he still found opportunities to harass the enemy. For example, Mosby wrote that he had led nine other scouts in a charge on ten unsuspecting Union soldiers near Manassas, "The Yankees ran and stampeded their whole regiment, thinking all of Stuart's cavalry were on them."³¹

Mosby used these operations to continually remind Stuart of his potential as a partisan leader. Finally, after Stuart completed his Christmas raid on Dumfries, Virginia, he agreed to let Mosby and nine men stay behind to harass Gen. Hooker's rear (see Figure 2, page 69). Within two days, Mosby had captured twenty Union cavalrymen. Most of the time, Mosby captured the cavalrymen by himself, and, after turning them over to his men, went off to find more. He observed that many of the Union pickets lacked discipline and were especially vulnerable to capture. Therefore, he searched for these easy opportunities, often finding his victims asleep or playing cards.

³¹ Mosby, Memoirs, p. 146.

After delivering his prisoners to Stuart and releasing his force of nine men, he commented that he could have been more successful with more men. Stuart agreed and gave Mosby fifteen men. Thus, on 18 January 1863, Mosby started his partisan unit with this nucleus of fifteen men.³²

Mosby wasted little time in starting his harassment of the vulnerable Union pickets and outposts. In the beginning, he could only get transient volunteers, and then, only for short periods of time. Sometimes they were cavalrymen in need of horses--the Confederacy required its soldiers to provide their own horses. Sometimes they were wounded soldiers who were convalescing--Mosby conducted forays from a hospital until one of the patients was killed in a raid. Sometimes they were deserters from the Union--one of Mosby's best men was a former sergeant in the Union cavalry. Sometimes they were transfers from other units and sometimes they were men looking for adventure and the spoils of war--Mosby let his men retain the booty they captured, similar to the privateers of the sea. As Mosby's raiding increased, so did his reputation. Consequently, he attracted greater numbers of permanent volunteers.

Mosby conducted most of his raids at night when the Union pickets were most vulnerable and his men were not. As his force became more dependable, however, he began to exploit any opportunity the enemy would give him, day or night. Mosby's daylight raid on Herndon Station, Virginia, only two months after he started his partisan career, provides a good example of how much his operations had improved. On 17 March, in Fairfax

³²Ibid, p. 149. Mosby's unit operated under the authority granted him by Brig. Gen. Stuart. His unit was not authorized to organize as an official command until two months later.

County, Virginia, one of Mosby's scouts reported an enemy outpost, near Herndon Station, exposed to attack (see figure 2, page 69). Mosby thought that the enemy would not expect them to attack in the daytime because he and his men had been making all their attacks in Fairfax County at night. Consequently, they did just that. Mosby's force of approximately 42 men maneuvered around to the rear of the outpost and approached them from the direction of the Union camp. The 25 men of the Union outpost had expected to see their relief approach from that same direction. Therefore, when Mosby's force appeared, the outpost believed they were friendly. They left their horses tied to a fence and continued to lounge about. Mosby wrote:

When we got within a hundred yards of them, an order to charge was given. They were panic-stricken--they had no time to untie their horses and mount--and took refuge in the loft of the mill. I was afraid that if they had time to recover from their shock, they would try to hold the mill against us with their carbines until reinforcements came. There was a pile of dry timber and shavings on the floor, and the men were ordered, in a loud voice to set the mill on fire. When we reached the head of the stairs, the Yankees surrendered. They were defenceless against the fire, and it was not their ambition to be cremated alive. Not a shot was fired.³³

Mosby's raid on Herndon Station netted one major, one captain, two lieutenants, twenty-one men, twenty-six horses and all their weapons and equipment; not one of Mosby's men was lost. Some of the Union soldiers, who had fled upon the initial attack, alerted a nearby Union cavalry force that immediately pursued Mosby. Mosby's rear guard, however, intercepted the pursuing unit and forced their withdrawal. The operation ended with Mosby's force escorting their captives to the Confederate lines.

³³ibid, p. 163-164.

The Herndon Station raid demonstrates how effective Mosby's unit had become after only two months of operation. It also serves as a model for many of the raids Mosby conducted in later operations. This does not mean that Mosby's operations always reached this level of success. On the contrary, many of his operations lost men in action or, on occasion, failed completely. The Herndon Station raid does, however, show how Mosby interlaced his operations with deception, surprise, speed, and audacity.

Mosby's operations also reflect that he never overcame the insecurity or sensitivity caused by his frail physique. Insecurity drove him to volunteer for difficult and daring operations. He was consumed with the desire to constantly prove himself. Therefore, these daring operations served to appease this desire, and temporarily counterbalanced his feelings of insecurity. Furthermore, Mosby's sensitivity probably fueled or even caused his stubborn, antagonistic, and non-conformist tendencies. All these traits combined to establish a character more afraid of failure and of ridicule than of death. As a result, he became a fighter who would not and could not quit. He overcame most of the obstacles he faced and he often twisted adversity in his favor. These obstacles include: (1) overcoming sickness and his doctor's prediction of childhood death; (2) turning his prison sentence into an opportunity to study law; (3) inducing the prosecutor to help him become a lawyer and the sentencing judge to swear him in; (4) rising from the rank of private to lieutenant in a year and counterbalancing his return to the rank of private by becoming Stuart's favorite scout; and (5) manipulating his capture by the Union into a successful intelligence gathering operation.

As stated earlier, many of Mosby's character traits helped him to become a successful partisan leader. He also had one very important physical trait, his piercing blue eyes. When Mosby was captured by the Union forces in 1862, the capturing officer included in his official report that Mosby, "has a keen blue eye." Another source mentions, "His eyes, which did not glance but pierced, gave him added control, perhaps hypnotic, over his men."³⁴ John Esten Cooke, a former member of Gen. Stuart's staff, wrote:

No one would have been struck with anything noticeable in him except the eyes. These flashed at times in a way which might have induced the opinion that there was something in the man, if it only had an opportunity to "come out."³⁵

Mosby overcame his lack of physical stature by effectively using his piercing blue eyes. When one looked in Mosby's eyes, one knew he meant business. Consider this statement, by one of Mosby's men, describing his first meeting with Mosby:

He turned upon me suddenly, meeting my full glance. At that instant the secret of his power over his men was disclosed. It was in his eyes, which were deep blue, luminous, clear, piercing; when he spoke they flashed the punctuations of his sentence.³⁶

³⁴Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, How the North Won, (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1983), p. 445.

³⁵John Esten Cooke, Wearing of the Gray, (New York: E. B. Treat and Company, 1867), p. 115.

³⁶Virgil C. Jones, Ranger Mosby, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944), pp. 13-14.

This might explain how Mosby could single-handedly capture two Union cavalrymen, escort them through another Union cavalry force, and have neither prisoner raise the alarm.³⁷

In conclusion, this section described Mosby's background, outlined his important personal traits, and provided background information about the incidents prior to the formation of Mosby's partisan unit. The next three sections of Chapter 3 each describe and analyze one of Mosby's offensive operations using the United States Army's "Five Paragraph Operations Plan" as a model. Each section: (1) provides the Union's and Confederate's disposition and condition at the beginning of the operation; (2) outlines Mosby's purpose, intent, and concepts; (3) describes the actual conduct of the operation; (4) identifies any important equipment or supplies; (5) explains any relevant factors concerning command, control, or communications; (6) discusses the effects of the operation on both the Union and the Confederacy; (7) identifies and analyzes the operational techniques of Mosby and his unit

³⁷Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, p. 73

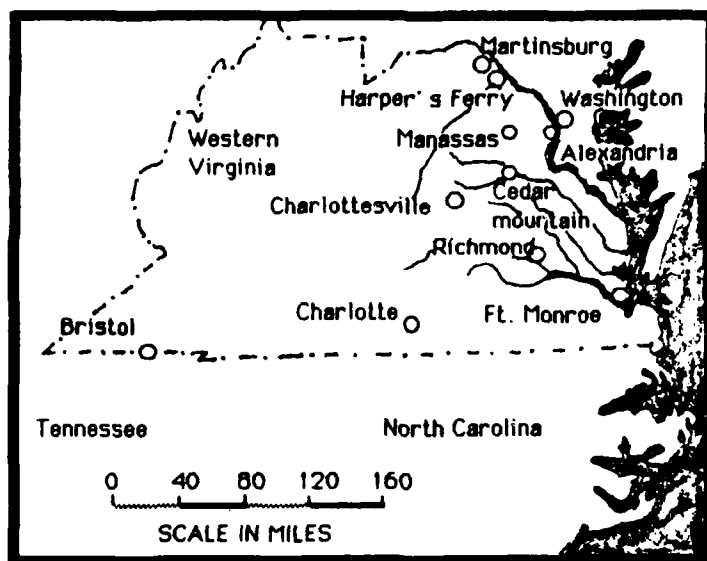


FIGURE 1
VIRGINIA AND WESTERN VIRGINIA

CHAPTER 3

SECTION 1

RAID ON FAIRFAX COURT HOUSE

8-9 MARCH 1863

When Mosby began his partisan operations on 18 January 1863, both the Union and Confederate armies in Virginia were at a standstill. Less than a month earlier, they had fought the battle of Fredericksburg, where the Army of the Potomac had lost 15,000 men. Then, nature intervened. The harsh winter weather had caused many of the roads to become quagmires, preventing both armies from logistically supporting a major offensive. As a result, the two forces halted in place, rested, rebuilt their combat strength, and waited until spring when the wagons, artillery, and infantry could move by road. The cavalry units, however, continued to operate, but were limited by the scarcity of forage or, in some areas, roads that were totally impassible.

The Union also used this idle period as an opportunity to reinforce its defenses around the nation's capital. These defenses consisted of a covering force in Virginia and fortifications in and around Washington (see figure 2, page 69). The twenty-five mile extension into Virginia provided a buffer for Washington's main defenses and helped secure lines of communication between the capital and the Army of the Potomac, located 50 miles south near Fredericksburg. The covering force consisted of a semicircular chain

of fortified positions extending south from the upper Potomac, through Dranesville, Centreville, Occoquan, and back to the Potomac. The Union cavalry then filled the gaps between the fortified positions with a picket line of outposts and patrols.¹

Near the center of this covering force area was Fairfax Court House. This small village, approximately seventeen miles west of Washington and seven miles inside the picket line, consisted of a court house, a hotel, a church, and a small number of houses and businesses. It served as the county seat of Fairfax, Virginia, and the headquarters of Brig. Gen. Edwin H. Stoughton, commander of the 2nd Vermont Brigade. Stoughton's infantry brigade was part of Maj. Gen. Silas Casey's division, which, in turn, was assigned to the Union's Department of Washington.² Fairfax Court House was also the headquarters of the cavalry brigade commanded by Col. Percy Wyndham, a soldier of fortune who had served with Garibaldi in Italy.³ Wyndham's brigade was also assigned to the Department of Washington.

Many of the subordinate units of Casey's division and all the units of Wyndham's brigade occupied positions near Fairfax. Brig. Gen. Stoughton's brigade consisted of five infantry regiments from Vermont, an aggregate of 3900 men. Three regiments made their camps south of the courthouse at

¹Siepel, Rebel, p. 71.

²QR, vol. XXV, pt. II, pp. 181-183. The Department of Washington, also designated the XXII Army Corps, was the title designated for the Washington defense force, commanded by Maj. Gen. Samuel P. Heintzelman. Its main forces consisted of two infantry divisions, the equivalent of two brigades of cavalry, and a twelve regiment reserve.

³The Cavalry Brigade was later designated as the 3rd Cavalry Brigade of the Department of Washington's Cavalry Division. QR, vol. XXV, pt. II, pp. 181-183.

Fairfax Station and two were camped farther south at Wolf Run Shoals (see figure 3, page 70).⁴ The 30th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment as part of the Department of Washington's reserve force, shared Fairfax Station with the three Vermont Regiments. It had responsibility for the protection of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad facilities at the Fairfax Station. Furthermore, four or five other Pennsylvania regiments provided security at various places along the Orange and Alexandria Railroad.

Portions of the 3rd Brigade of Casey's division occupied the small town of Centreville, seven miles west of Fairfax Court House, on the Warrenton Turnpike. It was situated on dominating bluffs and served as a major fortified position in the Union's picket line. The 3200 man brigade consisted of four New York infantry regiments and two batteries of artillery--the 11th Massachusetts and Pennsylvania's Keystone Battery.⁵ Because the Third Brigade did not have organic cavalry, the artillery batteries would often be required to perform cavalry functions. There were times, however, when a regiment from Wyndham's cavalry would temporarily augment the brigade.

Wyndham's brigade was camped northeast of Centreville, at Chantilly and Germantown. It had the responsibility for the picket line from Centreville through Chantilly to the Ox Road. His 2700 man brigade consisted of three cavalry regiments--1st West Virginia, 5th New York, and

⁴G. G. Benedict, Vermont in the Civil War, (Burlington, Vt: The Free Press Association, 1888), vol. II, pp. 424-426.

⁵James L. Bowen, Massachusetts in the War, 1861-1865, (Springfield, Mass: Bowen and Son, 1893), p. 844.

18th Pennsylvania--but it was often augmented with additional cavalry units.

Two additional infantry regiments were reportedly camped within 100 yards of Fairfax Court House, but the historical records do not indicate which units these were.⁶ A few references, however, indicated the possibility that a large number of military personnel did reside near the courthouse. First, Brig. Gen. Stoughton had a personal guard force from the Vermont regiments.⁷ Second, Stoughton's brigade had a hospital, a band, a provost marshal, quartermaster supplies, a telegraph, and a headquarters staff.⁸ Third, Col. Wyndham, having been captured and paroled earlier in 1862 by the Confederates,⁹ often retained a cavalry force in the village.¹⁰

In summary, the defense forces in and around Fairfax Court House appeared, on paper, to be quite secure. All major avenues into the village were protected by large forces and a strong picket line guarded all the minor access routes. As a result, the two Union headquarters at Fairfax Court House, 25 miles from the nearest known enemy, believed they were secure. They would not have felt so secure, however, if they had paid attention to Clausewitz's theory of friction, "Friction . . . is the force that makes the apparently easy so difficult . . . the only concept that more or

⁶OR, vol. XXV, pt. II, p. 1122.

⁷Benedict, Vermont, p. 429.

⁸Virgil C. Jones, Gray Ghosts and Rebel Raiders, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1956), pp. 147-154.

⁹Ibid, p. 148.

¹⁰Benedict, Vermont, p. 427.

less corresponds to the factors that distinguish real war from war on paper."¹¹

Three elements of this "friction" weakened the Fairfax Court House defenses. The first element was the Union's cavalry-outpost system. The system was designed "to form a flexible screen against infiltrating patrols and to check and report enemy movements."¹² The usual organization included one-half of the guard force's total strength in the center of the outpost as the "grand guard." A total of three pickets, groups of dismounted cavalry, were established to cover both flanks and the front of the grand guard. Vedettes, single mounted sentinals, usually fanned out in three directions five hundred yards from the pickets. The remainder of the guard force formed patrols which constantly moved between the grand guard and the pickets. Then, from 3 o'clock in the morning until sunrise, the patrols would normally operate as far as two miles forward of the vedettes.¹³ This outpost system was plagued with a number of weaknesses. (1) Because the units went on picket for 24 hour periods, outpost duty was hard on the men and especially on the horses. Furthermore, the vedettes were easy prey for enemy patrols--Mosby made his reputation proving this and then easily outdistanced his pursuers' tired horses. (2) Sometimes the Union had difficulties linking the pickets with the adjacent forces, causing gaps in the

¹¹Carl von Clausewitz, On War, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 119-120. The first English translation of Clausewitz's work appeared in London in 1874, p. xi.

¹²Jack Coggins, Arms and Equipment of the Civil War, (New York: The Fairfax Press, 1983), p. 52.

¹³Ibid.

defensive perimeter. (3) Other times, the capture of one vedette would open a sizeable gap in the perimeter, permitting a relatively easy entry. (4) The long hours of picketing combined with the vedettes' easy capture reduced the effectiveness and discipline of the picketing forces. Mosby's men often found the pickets inattentive, playing cards, or even asleep. Furthermore, the vedettes became so worried about their capture that they would gradually move closer to the pickets for security. The following chapters will show that Mosby enjoyed taking advantage of all these factors.

The second element of friction for the Union cavalry included the lack of training and poor equipment of some of the forces. For instance, some companies of the 18th Pennsylvania Cavalry Regiment were equipped with sabres and a few obsolete carbines, but most of the companies only had sabres. Furthermore, the entire regiment had only received four weeks of drill instruction prior to their arrival in Virginia for picket duty.¹⁴ Mosby wrote:

There was a new regiment in his [Wyndham's] brigade that was armed only with sabres and obsolete carbines. When we attacked them with revolvers, they were really defenceless [sic]. So I sent him word through a citizen that the men of that regiment were not worth capturing, and he must give them six-shooters.¹⁵

A third element of friction in the Union's defense was its lack of operational security. The Union forces were unable to prevent intelligence information from getting to Mosby. In the Fairfax area alone, at least two female civilians and possibly a third spied for Mosby. One of these, Antonia

¹⁴Samuel P. Bates, History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-5, (Harrisburg, PA: B. Singerly, State Printer, 1870), p. 1042.

¹⁵Mosby, Memoirs, pp. 151-152.

Ford, lived in Fairfax Court House, had a certificate of commission from JEB Stuart, and had a brother who was a first sergeant in Stuart's cavalry. Miss Ford had, on one occasion, ridden 20 miles to provide Stuart with information on Union troop movements. Furthermore, all the senior Union commanders headquartered in the village stayed at Miss Ford's home as guests. These included Union Generals Irvin McDowell, George B. McClellan and John Pope. Additionally, Brig. Gen. Stoughton's mother and sister were her guests the night of Mosby's raid on Fairfax Court House. After the raid, Miss Ford boasted, in private, that she had provided Mosby with information enabling him to successfully conduct his raid. She also admitted that he had stayed at her house on a number of occasions.¹⁶

Another local spy was Miss Laura Ratcliffe, who lived near the entrance route of Mosby's raid. Although Miss Ratcliffe's complicity in this particular raid has never been proven, Mosby admitted receiving information from her as early as 8 February 1863 and also professed that she had once saved his life.¹⁷

The third woman, identified as Miss A. J., was a special guest of Brig. Gen. Stoughton. She was a twenty-year-old truant and camp follower from Cambridge, Massachusetts. She attached herself to Brig. Gen. Stoughton as he was rising to the rank of general. He later "promoted" her to the rank of major, allowing her to receive all the entitled privileges--use of horses, rations, passes, orderlies, and billeting in a tent with a posted sentinel.

¹⁶General Lafayette C. Baker, History of the United States Secret Service, (Philadelphia: printed privately, 1867), pp. 170-173.

¹⁷John Bakeless, Spies of the Confederacy, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1970), pp. 62-63.

She later "attached" herself to Brig. Gen. Stoughton's replacement and was arrested in June of 1863, for fraternizing with Confederates.¹⁸ Although there is no evidence that Miss A. J. provided Mosby with any information, her presence and that of the other ladies mentioned, demonstrate the Union's lack of operational security in Fairfax.

Ironically, Brig. Gen. Stoughton and Col. Wyndham were aware of these problems. On 1 March 1863, seven days before Mosby's raid, Stoughton sent this message to the division commander outlining the weaknesses of the pickets:

... I will inform the major-general commanding that I have discovered that our cavalry pickets do not keep up a connected line on our right. Thus, the right picket of Colonel Wyndham's right rests on the Ox Road; then there is an opening of a mile or two before reaching the left picket of the command at Dranesville. This should be remedied, as it gives free ingress and egress to any wishing to give intelligence to the enemy. If anything transpires I will inform you. Last night, about 9 o'clock, while I was at headquarters, at the station [Fairfax, Station], a man undoubtedly a spy, was at the court-house, dressed as a captain. He interrogated all my servants minutely respecting the troops in the vicinity, asking if I kept my horse saddled in the night, and other suspicious questions.¹⁹

Later that night, Brig. Gen. Stoughton showed he understood his operational security problems when he sent this message to his commander

I take leave to represent to the major-general commanding that it is absolutely essential to the entire security of the commands in this vicinity that the women and the other irresponsible persons in this neighborhood be compelled to take the oath, or be placed outside the lines. I cannot fix upon any one person or persons who are culpable, yet I am perfectly satisfied that there are those here who, by means known to themselves, keep the enemy informed of all our

¹⁸Baker, Secret Service, pp. 385-386.

¹⁹OR, vol. XXV, pt. II, p. 114.

movements. Soldiers in the Southern service have even gone so far as to pay their families in the vicinity visits for weeks at a time, without it being discovered; and the few Union people there, fear to give the intelligence they would like to, lest the rebels should be informed of it . . . by their neighbors, who are watchful spies, notwithstanding they have subscribed to the oath, which half of them will not respect. There are in our midst men who are on their parole, who have large families (mostly women) who are rampant secessionists, and disguise it on no occasion. They are . . . constantly informed of their friends in the rebel service, and, I have no doubt, are in constant communication with them. . . . I cannot urge too strongly upon the major-general commanding, the manifest necessity of moving all persons beyond our lines who do not subscribe to the oath of allegiance. It is absolutely essential to the security of the command in this vicinity.²⁰

Brig. Gen. Stoughton accurately assessed his situation, and one might expect that he would have tightened security, especially in light of this warning sent by the 3rd Brigade commander on the evening of 6 March 1863:

Information is received that 150 of the enemy's cavalry are near Manassas. Colonel Stagg, First Michigan Cavalry, has just received information of other bodies assembling for the purpose of effecting a crossing at Woodyard or Wolf Run Shoals [where Brig. Gen. Stoughton has two regiments]. Two of the Michigan Cavalry were yesterday captured within reach of my artillery. I have telegraphed

General Stoughton. We will be ready to receive them if they come.²¹

If Stoughton paid attention to this warning or to the concerns of his own messages, he did not demonstrate it. Fairfax Court House was his domain and Brig. Gen. Stoughton conducted himself as he pleased. He chose to occupy Dr. Gunnel's two-story brick dwelling in the heart of the village, far away from his regiments at Fairfax Station and Wolf Run Shoals. He had

²⁰Ibid, pp. 114-115

²¹Ibid, p. 128.

fine horses, servants, and all the other accoutrements to which he was accustomed--he came from a very wealthy Vermont family. His brigade band serenaded him every morning and evening with his choice of music. He gave frequent and lavish parties for all his officers and selected guests--especially the ladies. He had planned a party for 8 March that promised to be one of the gala events of the year. All the loveliest ladies in the county would attend, including his visiting mother and sister who were boarding with the gracious Miss Ford. This was certainly no time to overreact to unsubstantiated predictions of possible Confederate movements. After all, cancelling the party would only serve to frighten the guests, and make Brig Gen. Edwin H. Stoughton look foolish.

On the night of the party, the weather had turned sour just before the guests began arriving. A steady rain started turning the snow on the ground into slush, promising a mud-filled environment for the next few days. Despite the weather the Gunnel house was warm and cozy, so while the rain dampened the ground, it did nothing to dampen the spirit of the party. Stoughton's party was already a huge success, all the important people attended and all the officers witnessed how a general can entertain--all the officers except Col. Percy Wyndham. At the last moment, Col. Wyndham was called unexpectedly to Washington. He probably surmised that this was just another piece of the bad luck he had been experiencing since late January.

The war had been going well for Col. Wyndham since his exchange as a prisoner in 1862. That is, until January 1863, when some of his pickets began disappearing. Wyndham probably believed that his transfer from the 1st New Jersey Cavalry Regiment and his subsequent promotion into the

command of the cavalry brigade were good omens. His luck began to change on 28 January 1863 when one of his units, the ill-trained and ill-equipped 18th Pennsylvania Cavalry Regiment, had nine men captured from their vedettes and picket posts. Upon learning this, Wyndham collected two hundred cavalrymen and, with a vengeance, personally led the pursuit to capture the raiders. His force travelled all day, and by night had established a camp at Middleburg, Virginia. The next morning, as Wyndham's force departed the town, Mosby and seven men boldly charged the rear of the Union cavalry, killing one soldier and capturing three others. Then Mosby pulled back to the edge of town and taunted the Union troops. Wyndham attacked and captured three of Mosby's group, forcing the Confederates to withdraw. Wyndham regained his pickets in Middleburg, after they had been paroled, and was even credited with a victory over Stuart's cavalry.²² He had no idea he had confronted Mosby and won. Considering Mosby's "get-even" character, we can assume that Mosby was already planning his revenge.

A piece of that revenge took place on or about 1 February 1863, when Mosby conducted a night raid on outposts of the 18th Pennsylvania, killing one man and capturing twelve others. Wyndham had warned his units to be alert and had arranged for pickets to be supported by "quick-reaction" forces designed to counterattack and save the pickets. Mosby's men had sprung the trap, but Wyndham's reaction force was too slow in catching them.²³

Frustrated and angry, Wyndham threatened to burn Middleburg if the Confederate raids continued. In reaction, the town's people approached

²²Major John Scott, Partisan Life with Col. John S. Mosby, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1867), pp. 26-27

²³OR, vol. XXV, pt. I, p. 5

Mosby with a petition to stop his raiding, but he refused to comply with their wishes. Wyndham never executed his threat, but he did prepare more traps and increase his patrols in order to catch the audacious raiders.

On 8 February, eighteen cavalrymen of the 18th Pennsylvania Regiment escorted six wagons near Middleburg, easy prey for Mosby's men. Furthermore, fifteen miles away, at Frying Pan, Virginia, the 18th Regiment presented a very vulnerable picket. To say that the 18th Regiment invited an attack would be correct--both of these were traps planned by Wyndham's men to catch Mosby. The wagons were each loaded with six concealed infantrymen and the picket post at Frying Pan had a large reaction force nearby, poised for attack. Although these traps were good ideas, they failed to attract Mosby. Why? Because Mosby never saw the wagon train, and Miss Laura Ratcliffe warned him of the other trap. Mosby did, however, attack a picket at Dranesville, Virginia, about five miles north of Frying Pan, capturing fifteen men.²⁴

On the morning of 26 February 1863, Mosby attacked and routed an outpost of fifty men of the 18th Pennsylvania Cavalry, two miles from Wyndham's encampments at Germantown, Virginia; and a half-mile from a reserve of one hundred men. In all, Mosby killed four, captured five men and thirty-nine horses, and lost none of his own twenty-seven men. Col Wyndham was furious and, to make matters worse, the Washington newspapers exaggerated the accounts of this incident. The Evening Star, for example, printed this headline the following day, "Who was in Command? Forty Union Cavalry Captured!" The newspaper went on to say, "An example

²⁴Scott, Partisan Life, pp. 30-32.

will, of course, be made of the officer commanding this picket, by dismissing him from the service summarily, for permitting this surprise to succeed!²⁵ Furthermore, Wyndham was also forced to dispel the rumor in Washington, D.C. that he and eight hundred of his men had been captured.

As a result of his frustrations, Wyndham provided the excuse that he was dealing with horse-thieves, not soldiers. Mosby learned of this comment through citizens of the neighborhood and sent a reply to Wyndham saying that all of the horses he had captured had riders and all of the riders were armed. One should note, however, that calling Mosby or anyone else a horse-thief in 1863, was a serious charge. Wyndham probably intended his comment to dishonor and discredit Mosby's operations. Considering his personality, Mosby probably took the comment as a personal attack on his honor and, no doubt, began earnestly searching for additional ways to "get even."

On 27 February 1863, Wyndham conducted a reconnaissance in force from Centreville, south to the headquarters of the Union's Army of the Potomac near Fredericksburg, and then north, arriving on 2 March at the camps near Fairfax Court House. Wyndham's reconnaissance was successful in locating the cavalry camps of Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army, but he found no signs of Mosby.²⁶ During this operation, Wyndham, perhaps as a result of Mosby's operations and the newspaper stories, submitted his resignation from command and left his brigade on 1 March. His commander, Maj. Gen. Samuel

²⁵Jones, Ranger Mosby, p. 83.

²⁶OR, vol. XXV, pt. I, pp. 38-39.

P. Heintzelman, refused to accept his resignation and Wyndham rejoined his brigade the same day.²⁷

Also on the evening of 1 March, Wyndham dispatched Maj. Joseph Gilmer, and two hundred men of the 18th Pennsylvania Cavalry, to cautiously but deliberately move toward Middleburg. The plan required Gilmer to follow a specific route and timetable. Unfortunately for Wyndham, Maj. Gilmer and his men began drinking alcohol in order to combat the chills of the night. By the following morning, Gilmer and his men were drunk. They disobeyed Wyndham's specific instructions and timetable and rode into Middleburg capturing and harassing the old men of the town. Mosby, learning of the Union's presence in Middleburg, decided to pursue Gilmer in order to harass his rear. Mosby arrived in Middleburg shortly after Gilmer's force had departed with its civilian captives. The town's women and children approached Mosby and pleaded with him to rescue their men. Mosby, thinking this a chivalrous idea, resumed his pursuit. Meanwhile, a few miles east, near Aldie, Virginia, Gilmer's inebriated force ran into the scouts of a Union patrol from the 1st Vermont Cavalry. Gilmer immediately assumed that the Vermont patrol was the Confederate force he had failed to find in Middleburg. Therefore, he and his unit quickly withdrew toward Aldie as fast as their horses could carry them. They continued south toward Groveton and raced back to Centreville. In their haste to escape, they abandoned their captives from Middleburg. A few moments later, a few of Gilmer's stragglers met the 1st Vermont and reported that the detachment the Vermont patrol had just seen belonged to Gilmer; there were no enemy

²⁷Ibid, pp 39-40.

forces in Aldie. The fifty-nine men of the 1st Vermont, on their own anti-guerrilla patrol, rode into Aldie and dismounted in order to feed their horses. Ironically, Mosby arrived a short time later from Middleburg and, thinking these were Gilmer's men, attacked the Vermont force. Mosby's unit of seventeen men scattered the larger patrol and captured two captains, seventeen men, and twenty-three horses. Mosby, with two wounded men of his own, still thought the Yankees were part of Gilmer's force. Therefore, he quickly withdrew before Gilmer's reinforcements could arrive.²⁸

The Aldie raid caused serious problems for Wyndham, not the least of which were the newspaper reports announcing:

Another bungle has taken place on our front. . . . It is ascertained certainly that there is no enemy in or about Middleburg. What is imperatively necessary here is some cavalry commander who can enforce such discipline among his men as to keep them always in the state of caution as will prevent his pickets from being gobbled up through the carelessness and gross negligence of the officers he sends out in command of detachments.²⁹

Considering the success that Mosby was having and the problems that Wyndham's cavalry was experiencing, one would think that Brig. Gen. Stoughton and Col. Wyndham would have been more security minded. Nevertheless, on the night of 8 March 1863, they posted no extra sentinels and instituted no password.³⁰

While the Union's Army of the Potomac was encamped near Fredericksburg, Virginia, on the north side of the Rappahannock River, the main portion of the Confederate army was encamped on the south side. The

²⁸Ibid, pp. 41-42, 1121.

²⁹Jones, Ranger Mosby, p. 89.

³⁰Ibid, p. 93.

closest force to Mosby's area of operations was Col. Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry brigade, at Culpeper Court House. Mosby, however, worked directly for Gen Stuart, the commander of the Confederate cavalry division, but he received very few specific orders from him. Furthermore, as Mosby became more successful, Stuart provided even less guidance.

In addition to using intelligence from civilian citizens in the area, Mosby also used the intelligence he gathered from his own reconnaissances. Although Mosby made no claims of personally conducting a reconnaissance for the Fairfax Court House raid, it is unlikely that he did not do so. First, Mosby personally reconnoitered almost every planned operation. Each time Mosby met his men at their predesignated rendezvous points, he already had an established plan for the night's operation. He could only do this if he had personally reconnoitered the operation. Second, Mosby reported to Stuart that he had accurately ascertained the number and disposition of enemy forces for the raid.³¹ Third, Miss Antonia Ford boasted that she had billeted Mosby and provided him with information for the raid.

Mosby also received intelligence information from his captives. Making the captives talk was probably easy considering that Mosby could give his prisoners the option of immediate parole if they talked, or, prison if they did not. Logically, however, Mosby had to have some prior knowledge in order to know if the captives were telling him the truth.

In the case of the Fairfax raid, Mosby had an additional source of intelligence. In February, Sgt. Ames, a huge man from Maine, deserted from

³¹QR, vol. XXV, pt. I, p. 1121.

the 5th New York Cavalry Regiment to join Mosby's unit.³² Mosby asked him questions about the disposition of troops near Fairfax and, matching this information with the knowledge he already had, believed Ames' information. Before allowing Ames to participate in any missions, however, Mosby required the Yankee to acquire his own horse. Ames said that if he had to walk thirty miles to his old unit at Germantown, just to get a horse, he would do so. And, escorted by one of Mosby's men, he did just that; returning the next day with mounts from the stables of the 5th New York. Later, as a precaution, Mosby further tested Ames on a raid. Afterward, Mosby was convinced that Ames was a trustworthy Confederate soldier.³³

Mosby had been contemplating the Fairfax raid since early February when he had written Gen. Stuart, who urged Wyndham's capture, that the cavalry at Fairfax Court House was separated from its main body and vulnerable to attack.³⁴ Furthermore, Ames' trek to the stables of his previous unit reinforced Mosby's statement that the defense forces around Fairfax Court House were penetrable.³⁵

Therefore, armed with the belief that success was possible, and motivated by his resolve to "get even" with Wyndham, Mosby began, on or about 3 March 1863, to finalize the plan for the Fairfax Court House raid. Mosby stated a three-fold purpose for the raid: capture Wyndham; capture

³²Mosby never asked why Ames deserted, he said it did not matter. Mosby did say that until Ames died, he never had a more faithful follower. John S. Mosby, Mosby's War Reminiscences and Stuart's Cavalry Campaigns, (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1887), p. 68.

³³Mosby, Memoirs, pp. 168-169.

³⁴Jones, Gray Ghosts, p. 151.

³⁵Siepel, Rebel, p. 72.

horses; and destroy supplies and equipment. He intended to penetrate the picket line under the cover of darkness, taking advantage of any gaps he might find in the defense. Once they had passed the outer picket line, the mission would be safe--most Union units would mistake them for a friendly patrol in the dark. Mosby planned to reach the courthouse by mid-night so that they could return before sunrise. Once they were in the village, they would capture Wyndham and any other officers they could find, capture the best horses, and burn the quartermaster, commissary, and sutler stores ³⁶ Mosby believed the Union was vulnerable to this venture because it was the first of its kind ever tried by the Confederacy. He also believed that their "safety was in the audacity of the enterprise."³⁷ Finally, he understood that the plan required silent execution--fire arms could only be used as a last resort. Mosby decided that his men would execute this plan at their next meeting on Saturday, 7 March 1863, at Rectors Crossroads, near Middleburg

Mosby had planned to begin his advance to the picket line in the late afternoon. He was forced to wait, however, for the return of the prisoner escorts resulting from the skirmish near Aldie on 2 March. Disappointed, Mosby moved to Dover, near Aldie, Virginia, and postponed his raid until the next day.

On Sunday, 8 March, Mosby's men arrived later than expected, therefore, his march began in the evening with twenty-nine men. The weather, with its steady rain and melting snow, assisted the operation by reducing the enemy's observation and alertness. Their route of march went from Aldie,

³⁶QR, vol. XXV, pt. I, p. 1121.

³⁷Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, p. 36.

east on the Little River Pike to within three miles of Chantilly. They turned right on an obscure path and began to ride single file across the country

The night was so dark with rain and mist that, as they passed through a dense body of pines, the column became separated. Mosby, in the lead, continued his advance unaware of the separation. The trail party had stopped under the impression that a halt had been ordered. When they realized their isolated situation, the trail party could not decide its next move. Mosby had not explained any portion of the operation to his men. They were totally unaware of where they were, where they were going, or what they were going to do. The trail party discussed, or probably argued their quandary among themselves. They could turn back, remain where they were, or try to continue. At the end of considerable discussion, they decided to continue. After proceeding a short distance through the thick woods, they spotted a small light in the distance. They cautiously proceeded toward the light, found a small hut and rejoined Mosby and their other companions. The raid, which had started late, had lost another hour during the separation in the woods. Mosby knew that time was critical to the operation's success, the raid had to be completed before first-light.

After leaving the hut, the raiders crossed the Centreville-Frying Pan road halfway between Centreville and the Little River Pike (see figure 4, page 71). As they neared the Union picket line, Mosby explained his intentions to Sgt. Ames and had the "ex-Yankee" lead the column of horsemen through the picket line. Each man was dismounted, ready to stifle any noise his horse might make. Mosby wrote:

It was pitch dark when we got near the pickets at Chantilly--five or six miles from Fairfax Court House. At Centreville, three miles

away on the Warrenton pike and seven miles from the Court House, were several thousand troops. Our problem was to pass between them and Wyndham's cavalry without giving the alarm. Ames knew where there was a break in the picket lines between Chantilly and Centreville, and he led us through this without a vidette seeing us. After passing the outpost the chief point in the game was won. I think no man with me, except Ames, realized that we were inside the enemy's lines.³⁸

Once inside the picket line, the column could travel faster because the Union troops would assume they were friendly cavalry. They continued toward Fairfax and came upon the Warrenton Pike, four miles east of the courthouse. They cut the telegraph lines and started down the pike until they were within one and one-half miles of the courthouse. The column was forced to turn right and leave the pike to avoid some enemy camps. Mosby's men worked their way cross-country and, at approximately 2 a.m., entered Fairfax Court House on the road from Fairfax Station.³⁹ The partisan leader explained the plan to his men shortly before entering the village.

A few hours before Mosby entered the village, Brig. Gen. Stoughton's party was in full swing. And, except for Col. Wyndham, almost all the officers in the vicinity were in attendance, including: Wyndham's Austrian guest, Baron R. B. Wardner; and Wyndham's temporary replacement, Lt. Col. Robert Johnstone of the 5th New York Cavalry. The party began breaking up shortly after midnight. The revelers entered their coaches and repaired to their quarters. Brig. Gen. Stoughton, smelling strongly of champagne, retired to his bedroom in the Gunnel home, leaving his aide to turn down the lights and secure the house.

³⁸Mosby, Memoirs, p. 172-173.

³⁹OR, vol. XXV, pt. I, pp. 1121-1122.

The village showed no sign of the noise and gaiety that had prevailed a few hours before. The bright lights had disappeared one by one, as the towns' folk retired, until only two or three lights pierced the night mist. One light shown from the entrance of Robert F. Weitbrecht's tent. He was the on-duty telegrapher, waiting for any important messages that Washington might send.⁴⁰ A short distance away, another light shone from a hotel window, barely illuminating a sentinel as he walked his post at the courthouse. The sentinel had not seen any movement in, perhaps, the last half-hour or so. He heard and then saw a cavalry unit approaching from the direction of Fairfax Station, where the Vermont infantry regiments were camped. As the riders neared his position in the dim light, the sentinel probably only noticed their dark gum coats,⁴¹ with their collars raised to protect against the cold rain. As two men dismounted, he challenged them for identification. He heard the big man say, with a deep Maine accent, that they were members of the 5th New York Cavalry and were waiting for Maj. White to arrive. The sentinel turned to continue walking his post when the big man called to him to whisper something in his ear.⁴² The next moment, the sentinel had two revolvers to his head and heard one of the men say they would "blow his brains out if he said a word."⁴³ Sgt. Ames and his partner, Walter Frankland, disarmed the surprised Union sentinel and turned him over to one of the other Virginia rangers for safe keeping. Mosby divided the unit into smaller groups, assigned each group a portion of the village, and

⁴⁰William R. Plum, The Military Telegraph During the Civil War in the United States, (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg, and Company, 1882), pp. 359-361.

⁴¹Also called a gum blanket, similar to a poncho.

⁴²Scott, Partisan Life, p. 45.

⁴³Jones, Ranger Mosby, p. 93.

instructed them all to rendezvous at the courtyard. The Union provost-marshall, Lieut. D. L. O'Connor, submitted the following report from accounts he later pieced together:

... the force came up and captured every man on patrol, with horses, equipments, &c., until reaching the Provost-Marshall's stables, captured his guard, took his horses and those of his aids [sic]. They then proceeded to Colonel Wyndham's headquarters and took all the horses and movable property with them. In the meantime others (of Captain Mosby's command) were despatched to all quarters where officers were lodged, taking them out of their beds, together with the telegraph operator, assistant, &c., &c. They searched the Provost-Marshall's office, and, finding him absent, went to the post hospital [at the hotel] and there made diligent search for him, offering a reward for him. The Provost-Marshall had just left the street, say ten minutes before they entered ...⁴⁴

The operation closely matched Lieut. O'Connor's report. Several detachments were dispatched to the stables and quarters. Mosby, however, took his detachment to the Murray home located at the far end of town, where he believed Col. Wyndham was quartered. The Murphys informed Mosby that Wyndham was residing at Judge Thomas' residence, which they had previously passed when they entered the town. Mosby and his men returned to the courtyard and discovered a number of horses already herded together. He met one of his men, Joe Nelson, who had captured telegrapher Weitbrecht and a soldier admitting to be one of the guards at Gen. Stoughton's headquarters. Mosby directed Ames to get Wyndham while he would pay his respects to the general.

Ames' party rode to the Thomas home, entered it, and searched each room. They discovered two of Wyndham's staff asleep, but Wyndham, they

⁴⁴Ibid.

learned, had gone to Washington. One member of the staff protested his capture by insisting that he was only a sutler, pointing to the confiscated merchandise stored around the room. His protest ceased, however, when Ames entered the room and recognized the "sutler" as his previous company commander, Capt. Barker.⁴⁵ Ames' men made up for their loss of Col. Wyndham by taking his staff officers, horses, uniforms, and other personal property.

Meanwhile, Mosby took five or six men to the Gunnel home, where Brig Gen. Stoughton resided. He dismounted, found the door locked, and proceeded to knock on the door until a second-story window opened and a head appeared. Mosby answered the inquiry of who was there by announcing, "Fifth New York Cavalry with a dispatch for Gen. Stoughton."⁴⁶ The window closed and, as Mosby explains:

Footsteps were soon heard tripping down stairs and the door opened. A man stood before me with nothing on but his shirt and drawers. I immediately seized hold of his shirt-collar, and whispered in his ear who I was, and ordered him to lead me to the general's room. He was Lieutenant Prentiss of the staff. We went straight up stairs where Stoughton was, leaving Walt Hatcher and George Whitescarver (two of Mosby's men) behind to guard the horses. When a light was struck we saw lying on the bed before us the man of war. He was buried in deep sleep. . . . As the general was not awakened by the noise we made in entering the room, I walked up to his bed and pulled off the covering. But even this did not arouse him. He was turned over on his side snoring. . . . I just pulled up his shirt and gave him a spank. Its effect was electric. The brigadier rose from his pillow and in an authoritative tone inquired the meaning of this rude intrusion. He had not realized that we were not some of his staff. I leaned over and said to him: "General, did you ever hear of Mosby?" "Yes," he

⁴⁵Scott, Partisan Life, p. 46.

⁴⁶Williamson, Ranger Mosby, p. 39.

quickly answered, "have you caught him?" "No," I said, "I am Mosby-- he has caught you." In order to deprive him of all hope I told him that Stuart's Cavalry held the town and that General Jackson was at Centreville.⁴⁷

Stoughton inquired if Col. Fitzhugh Lee was also there, and Mosby, continuing his ruse, replied affirmatively. Stoughton then requested to be taken to Lee because they had been classmates at West Point. Mosby allowed the general to dress and then escorted him out the front door. They rejoined Whitescarver and Hatcher, the guards Mosby had left with the horses, who had captured seven headquarters couriers and several fine horses. Mosby provides a good description of his final moments in the village:

I was determined to bring off the general, even if we had to abandon all our other captures. So I would not let Stoughton hold his bridle-reins, but told Hunter (William L. Hunter, one of Mosby's most trusted men) to ride by his side and hold them at all hazards. I knew that Hunter would stick to him closer than a brother. Lieutenant Prentiss also started with us a prisoner, but as I let him hold his bridle-reins he left us in the dark, and never even said good-night. When we returned to the court-house square all the squads had collected there and duly done their work. There were twenty-nine men with me and we had about one hundred prisoners and horses to guard. It was so dark that the prisoners did not know my men from their own. In the town there were several hundred soldiers, but there was no concert of action among them. All was panic and confusion. Each man was in search of a safe hiding-place.⁴⁸

Mosby met Ames at the square and heard the bad news about having missed Wyndham. Although disappointed, Mosby knew they had already accomplished more than he had expected, and without firing a shot. Mosby

⁴⁷Ibid, pp. 39-40.

⁴⁸Ibid, p. 41.

also knew that his command would not be safe until it passed the picket line before sunrise. Therefore, he began riding through the throng of people, organizing the column for the return march. The raid only lasted a little more than an hour, but the raiders performed their jobs so well that the prisoners and towns people believed the Confederate raiders numbered over three hundred.⁴⁹ At approximately 3:30 a.m., on Monday, 9 March 1863, Mosby led his command out of Fairfax Court House. In their haste to comply with Mosby's departure instructions, his men had not been able to assemble all the prisoners and horses. Therefore, they abandoned the fortunate ones in the panic-stricken courtyard.

Mosby's unit exited the village using the same road that they had earlier used to enter. Mosby purposely chose this route to deceive any pursuers as to their real direction of travel. Just as they cleared the edge of the village, a window was thrown open and a voice commanded the column to stop. Lt. Col. Robert Johnstone, the acting camp commander, demanded to know what was going on and who authorized this operation.⁵⁰ He received a few loud and disrespectful chuckles in reply. Mosby directed two of his men to enter the house and escort the commander to one of the many fine horses his men had with them. When Mosby's men entered Johnstone's house, they encountered their only resistance of the entire operation. The two men had broken through the front door and were met by Mrs. Johnstone who fought and scratched them like a lioness. Her obstruction provided her husband with sufficient time to make his nude escape. Mosby's men searched every place they could think of but Johnstone could not be found. The Confederates

⁴⁹Jones, Ranger Mosby, p. 87.

⁵⁰Plum, The Military Telegraph, p. 360.

took the Union officer's clothing with them as consolation for their loss. Mosby ordered the march to resume and were soon out of sight. Lt. Col. Johnstone made good his escape by selecting a hiding place that even Mosby's men had not considered; he had hidden underneath the outhouse.⁵¹

Mosby's column rode south toward Fairfax Station and turned to the right after travelling a half-mile. They regained the Warrenton Turnpike approximately four miles from Centreville. Some of Mosby's men were riding on the flanks and some in the rear in order to prevent the prisoners from escaping. The route had been so dark, however, that many prisoners got away. Once they were all on the turnpike, Mosby halted the column to close it up. He believed the principle danger to the unit was to its front, so he turned his command over to Hunter and rode on ahead to personally reconnoiter. Mosby returned a short time later, called to Hunter, and ordered him to move forward toward Centreville at a fast trot. Mosby then selected Joe Nelson to remain with him some distance to the rear of the unit. Nelson and Mosby stopped often to listen for any noises indicating they were being pursued, but they only heard the hoots of owls.

The campfires around Centreville soon became visible. Nelson and Mosby, still in the rear, saw the column halt. They galloped forward to find out why and learned that a smoldering fire was spotted next to the pike only one hundred yards ahead. Mosby, thinking it belonged to a picket, cautiously approached the dying fire. No one was there, but the post had only been recently abandoned. As Mosby tells it:

⁵¹Jones, Gray Ghosts, pp. 156-157.

I called to Hunter to move on. We were then about a half mile from Centreville, and the gray dawn was just beginning to appear. We passed the [abandoned] picket post and then turned off to the right to go over the forts at Centreville. It had been the habit to establish a picket there every night and withdraw it early in the morning. The officer in charge concluding that there was no danger in the air, had returned to camp and gone to sleep just before we got there. The camps were all quiet; no sign of alarm; we could see the cannon bristling through the embrasures of the redoubts not more than two or three hundred yards away, and heard the sentinel on the parapet call us to halt. But no attention was paid to it. I was riding down a short distance ahead of the column when I heard a shot.⁵²

Ames' former commander, Capt. Barker, had seen the sentinels and cannon of Centreville and decided to ride to safety. One of Mosby's men fired at the escaping officer and was about to fire again when the Union officer's horse fell in a ditch. Mosby's men quickly gathered him up and placed him on another horse so the column could move on. This incident happened within full view of the Union sentinels at Centreville but nothing was done to hamper the Confederates. The sentinels probably believed that Mosby's force was friendly.

Mosby's unit left Centreville and the Union picket line behind, but they soon arrived at a significant and unexpected obstacle. The Cub Run, usually a small feeder stream to the much larger Bull Run, had swollen from the rain and melting snow into a raging torrent. Mosby knew he could not reverse his direction and renegotiate the defenses at Centreville. For all he knew, a pursuit force could be coming up on his rear, in a matter of a few moments. Mosby took the only valid course of action he had available and unhesitatingly spurred his horse into the icy and violent water. If he had

⁵²Williamson, Ranger Mosby, p 42-43.

hesitated, his men might have done the same. Instead, the unit plunged in after their leader. Mosby's horse turned out to be a good swimmer and made it to the far bank in good order. After gaining the far bank, Mosby turned in his saddle and witnessed many of his men and horses being swept away. Although worried for their safety, Mosby was unable to help them. He later remarked it was a miracle that not one man or horse was drowned, especially considering how many had been swept down stream. As Mosby organized his column for the remainder of the march, he realized that no pursuing cavalry unit would attempt to swim after them.

The column continued from Cub Run cross-country to Sudley Ford and then south to Groveton. Mosby rode ahead of the column to insure it did not meet a Union force that might have been sent ahead along the Warrenton Turnpike. Mosby rode off to a high hill where he could see the pike all the way to Centreville. He saw no Union patrols in pursuit on the pike and, a short time later, he saw his own unit enter the pike at Groveton. Mosby commented to himself that they were safe and, just then, the sun broke through the clouds.⁵³

Mosby's column continued to the town of Warrenton, Virginia. They retired there for the evening and started out the next morning for Col Fitzhugh Lee's headquarters at Culpeper Court House. Mosby presented his former executive officer with the fruits of his raid: one general, two captains, thirty men, and fifty-eight horses. Mosby commented on Fitzhugh Lee's actions with these words:

⁵³Ibid, p 44

When we arrived at our destination, we hitched our horses in the front yard and went into the house, where we found Fitz Lee writing at a table before a log fire. We were cold and wet. . . . [Fitzhugh Lee] was very polite to his old classmate and to the officers, when I introduced them, but he treated me with indifference, did not ask me to take a seat by the fire, nor seem impressed by what I had done. As a matter of historical fact, it is well known that this episode created a sensation in both armies, but the reception I received convinced me that I was not a welcome person at those headquarters. . . . In a few days Fitz Lee wrote me that the detail of men I had from his brigade [almost all of Mosby's men were in this category] must return to their regiment. . . . [however, this] attempt to deprive me of a command met with no favor from Stuart.⁵⁴

Mosby remained bitter toward Fitzhugh Lee from that point on, and avoided him at every opportunity. Mosby did get the "last word," however. First, Stuart countermanded Col. Lee's instructions concerning the return of Mosby's men. Second, Stuart composed the following public announcement of the raid and required it to be read on dress parade to every cavalry unit, including Col. Lee's:

Capt. John S. Mosby has for a long time attracted the attention of his generals by his boldness, skill, and success, so signally displayed in his numerous forays upon the invaders of his native state. . . . his daring enterprise and his dashing heroism. . . . justifies this recognition. . . . The feat [is] unparalleled in the war.⁵⁵

The success of the Fairfax raid had significant impact on both the Union and the Confederacy. For the Union, the raid's psychological effect was the most important and far reaching. It had been caught unprepared at a time when it should have been most alert. After losing the battle of Fredericksburg in December 1862, the Army of the Potomac was, for all

⁵⁴Mosby, Memoirs, pp. 182-185.

⁵⁵QR, vol XXV, pt. II, p. 856.

intent and purposes, on the defensive. With this defense came the advantages of more forces, more equipment, internal lines of communication, and the fear that Stuart's cavalry would attack somewhere in force. Furthermore, the Union army had numerous indications that the Confederacy may conduct a raid such as this one. Therefore, surprise should not have been a factor. The fact that the Union was surprised caused embarrassment from the combat units to the highest Federal office. The records of the 5th New York Cavalry read, "Such a raid . . . reflects very uncreditably upon some of our military leaders."⁵⁶ Union Capt. Willard Glazier also commented, "This was an occasion for great humiliation on the part of our troops."⁵⁷ The newspapers had a field day, for example the Washington Star remarked, "There is a screw loose somewhere, and we need a larger force in front. . . . It is about time that our brigadier generals at exposed points brighten up their spectacles a bit."⁵⁸ Finally, when President Lincoln heard about the captured men and horses, he tried to camouflage the Union's embarrassment with humor by saying, "I am sorry for that. I can make brigadier generals, but I can't make horses."⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Capt. Glazier pointed out in his book that no one in Washington or in the nation drew any humor from Lincoln's remark.

⁵⁶Rev. Louis N. Boudrye, Historic Records of the fifth New York Cavalry, (Albany: S. R. Gray, 1865), p. 52.

⁵⁷Willard Glazier, Three Years in the Federal Cavalry, (New York: R. H. Ferguson and Company, 1871), p. 151.

⁵⁸Harnett T. Kane, Spies for the Blue and Gray, (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1954), p. 174.

⁵⁹Staff of The Civil War Times Illustrated, "An Appraisal of John S. Mosby," in The Civil War Times Illustrated, (November 1965), p. 49.

Besides embarrassment, Mosby's raid also had another type of psychological affect, fear. And, once again, the effect ranged from the combat units to Washington. Soon after Mosby's raid, a company of the 18th Pennsylvania mutinied rather than go on picket.⁶⁰ Even the generals, many of whom were closer to the front lines than Stoughton, were afraid. From 11 to 16 March 1863, the message traffic between high ranking officers increased significantly. Official records contain at least sixteen short, but very concerned messages focused on such subjects as increased security, ten thousand enemy cavalry, protection of railroads, plots to destroy the Potomac Bridge, requests for additional cavalry, fear of surprise attacks, and requests for advice.⁶¹ Union Gen. Joseph Hooker told Congress that Mosby's operations caused such anxiety that the planks on the bridge across the Potomac were taken up every night.⁶² Again, even President Lincoln showed his concern on 13 March, when he: "... summoned Maj. Gen. Julius P. Stahel to the White House, ordered him personally to take charge of the cavalry in Fairfax, and warned him that, in the future, successful guerrilla raids would be cause for his deep displeasure."⁶³

Mosby's raid also caused the creation of new units and the replacement of soldiers and senior officers. First, the Union added a brigade of Michigan Cavalry to improve the capabilities of the Department of Washington and, specifically, guard against future raids.⁶⁴ The addition of this brigade

⁶⁰OR, vol XXV, pt. II, pp. 149-150.

⁶¹OR, vol XXV, pt. II, pp. 135-140.

⁶²Mosby, Memoirs, p. 150.

⁶³Siepel, Rebel, p. 77. Mosby's raids flourished over the next few months and as a result, Maj. Gen. Stahel was relieved of command on 28 June, 1863.

⁶⁴Scott, Portison Life, p. 53.

raised the total number of cavalry brigades, in the Department of Washington, to three. In order to control these brigades, the Union established a cavalry division under Maj. Gen. Stahel. Second, the Union had to replace the thirty-three captured men, including Brig. Gen. Stoughton. Third, Col. Wyndham, was relieved of his command, and temporarily replaced by Lt. Col. Johnstone. Lt. Col. Johnstone, however, never overcame the embarrassment of his nude escape, was replaced a month later, and retired.⁶⁵

Another result of Mosby's raid was evident in the Union's increased alertness to partisan activities. First, the Union intensified its security by removing suspected spies. It collected eight civilians from Fairfax, including Miss Ford, her father, a former sheriff, and five other prominent civilians with Southern sympathies, and placed them all in the Old Capitol Prison in Washington.⁶⁶ Second, the addition of the Michigan cavalry strengthened the picket line and made any future raids more difficult if not impossible. Third, the Union began setting more traps to catch the Confederate raiders.⁶⁷ Fourth, the Union cavalry increased flank and rear security during their offensive operations. For example, one week after the raid, Union Gen. William Averell led a three-thousand-man cavalry attack against Fitzhugh Lee's cavalry at Culpeper. Averell's advance was very cautious and he detached nine hundred cavalrymen to guard his rear and right

⁶⁵J. W. Munson, Reminiscences of a Mosby Guerrilla, (New York: Moffat, 1906), p. 51.

⁶⁶Kane, Spies For the Blue and Gray, p. 175; Jones, Ranger Mosby, p. 97.

⁶⁷Jones, Gray Ghosts, p. 165.

flank against Mosby.⁶⁸ Gen. Averell established this large security force because the Union believed Mosby's unit had three hundred men; the result of "eyewitness" reports from the Fairfax raid.⁶⁹ Finally, Mosby pointed out that the Union cavalry had learned a valuable lesson:

I was never able to duplicate this adventure. . . . The Northern cavalry got too smart to allow the repetition. My calculation of [the raid's] success was based on the theory that to all appearances it was an impossibility.⁷⁰

On the Confederate side, Mosby's raid provided the South with an emotional "shot in the arm." The Confederate chain-of-command and the newspapers, such as the Richmond Enquirer, were applauding Mosby's operation.⁷¹ Besides the tribute that Stuart had written for all cavalrymen to hear, Stuart pointed out that Mosby's praise was on every Southerner's lips.⁷² Gen. Robert E. Lee also added that Mosby had covered himself with honor.⁷³ More importantly, Confederate President Jefferson Davis signed orders commissioning Mosby as a captain in the Confederate Army and authorizing him to recruit and organize a legitimate command.⁷⁴

News of Mosby's operation carried quickly through the Fairfax area, improving his relations with the civilian population. One woman remarked, "The news was too good to keep, so we went round among our neighbors to

⁶⁸John W. Thomason, Jr., JEB Stuart, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p. 355.

⁶⁹Jones, Ranger Mosby, p. 93.

⁷⁰Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, p. 46.

⁷¹D. M. Kelsey, Deeds of Daring by Both Blue and Gray, (Philadelphia: Scammell and Company, 1893), p. 274.

⁷²QR, vol XXV, pt. II, p. 858.

⁷³Ibid, p. 664.

⁷⁴QR, vol LI, pt. II, p. 688.

tell it, and that day was one of rejoicing among us all."⁷⁵ The publicity also provided Mosby with more recruits. One week after his raid, Mosby reported, "I have received several more recruits. . . . Public sentiment seems now entirely changed, and I think it is the universal desire here for me to remain."⁷⁶

The success of this raid provided the following results: (1) the Confederacy learning that partisan warfare was both possible and fruitful; (2) Mosby and his men becoming more confident in their abilities, as demonstrated by the daylight attack on Herndon Station, mentioned previously; and (3) other units emulating the operation. In addition to the above results, some Confederate units believed that any unit could accomplish partisan operations. For example, shortly after his raid, Mosby asked for more men in order to strengthen his unit and offset the increase in Union security forces. He noticed that one Confederate cavalry unit had some cavalrymen who were used as infantry because they had no horses. He approached their commander and promised to mount and equip the dismounted cavalrymen. All Mosby wanted in return was their temporary use in his unit. He also thought this was a reasonable proposition because of the close proximity of the two units. Unfortunately, the other unit was the 1st Virginia Cavalry and the commander was still Fitzhugh Lee. Not only did Fitzhugh Lee deny Mosby the opportunity to use his men, he also decided that his men would conduct a little partisan operation of their own. After all, if Mosby's unit could secure horses for his men, then his could do likewise. Therefore, the dismounted cavalry and one of Fitzhugh Lee's

⁷⁵Scott, *Partisan Life*, pp. 52-53.

⁷⁶OR, vol XXV, pt. II, p. 667.

officers were sent to obtain horses and equipment from the Union cavalry. "The result was, that the dismounted men were soon all captured; for it was not so easy as it appeared to be to gobble up Yankee cavalry, and get their horses and equipment."⁷⁷

Two other benefits of Mosby's raid included his exemption from being elected as commander, and the selection of his unit's name. As mentioned earlier, the Confederacy adopted the policy whereby the men of a unit voted for their officers. Mosby, however, was exempt, although his lieutenants did have to be elected. This was probably tied to the fact that without Mosby, the unit would not have existed.

The second result was the name Mosby selected for his unit. Maj. Gen Stuart had warned:

... you will proceed to organize a band of permanent followers for the war, but by all means ignore the term "Partisan Ranger." It is in bad repute. Call your command "Mosby's Regulars," and it will give it a tone of meaning and solid worth which all the world will soon recognize, and you will inscribe that name of a fearless band of heroes on the pages of our country's history, and enshrine it in the hearts of a grateful people. Let "Mosby's Regulars" be a name of pride with friends and respectful trepidation with enemies.⁷⁸

Stuart had sent his advice on 25 March 1863, after Mosby's Fairfax and Herndon Station raids. Mosby, however, completely ignored Stuart's strong recommendation and called his unit "Mosby's Partisan Rangers." First of all, Mosby liked the name "partisan ranger." He thought the soldiers would identify with it more, and, thereby, he would attract more recruits.⁷⁹ But

⁷⁷Scott, Partisan Life, p. 53.

⁷⁸OR, vol XXV, pt. II, pp. 857-858.

⁷⁹Jones, Gray Ghosts, p. 167.

on the other hand, Mosby owed Stuart for everything--his command, his men, supplies, and equipment. Nevertheless, he may have ignored Stuart's urgings because the success of the last two operations and the orders of President Davis provided him with enough power to disagree with Stuart and get away with it.

There were two reasons for Mosby's success: luck and skill. The factors relating to Mosby's luck are included in the following: First, Mosby was lucky before the raid started because his men returned from prisoner escort duty in time to begin the mission on 8 March. Second, the presence of rain and mist favored him by obscuring the enemy's observation. Third, when his column separated in the woods, he was very fortunate to regain his trailing element in time to continue. Fourth, when Mosby was in Fairfax Court House, he experienced the bad luck of Wyndham's absence and the loss of Lt. Col. Johnstone. But, if he had not, by chance, discovered that Brig. Gen. Stoughton was in town, his raid would not have been sensational and his commission and command may never have materialized. Furthermore, if he had only captured Wyndham, as he originally planned, he probably would not have received the same notoriety. Fifth, Stoughton's party adversely affected the Union forces' alertness. Sixth, on his return march, Mosby had diverted from his original route, taking a chance that the road to Centreville was clear. He was fortunate, once again, that the Union picket had been abandoned earlier than normal. Seventh, as the raiders passed Centreville, where Capt. Barker tried to escape, Mosby was fortunate that Barker's horse stumbled and that the Centreville guards did not react to the subsequent shot fired by one of Mosby's men. Finally, even Mosby commented that

swimming the torrent at Cub Run, and not losing a soul or horse, was miraculous.

Mosby was certainly fortunate that chance was on his side, but as Clausewitz wrote, "War is the realm of chance." Clausewitz added that chance has less impact on leaders who can make rapid and accurate decisions, who possess determination, and who have presence of mind.⁸⁰ Mosby was this type of leader, possessing all three of these characteristics. He made quick, bold, and accurate decisions when he decided to pursue Stoughton's capture, and when he changed his exit route because he had just lost a number of prisoners and horses in the dark woods. He also made the quick decisions not to let the guards at Centreville or the torrent at Cub Run impede his operation.

Mosby displayed determination throughout his life. This raid started and finished only because of that intense determination. The quality of presence of mind is defined by Clausewitz as the "increased capacity of dealing with the unexpected. . . . the speed and immediacy of the help provided by the intellect."⁸¹ When Mosby told Stoughton that Stuart and Jackson were in control of the surrounding area and when he answered Stoughton's question with the lie about Fitzhugh Lee's location, he demonstrated his presence of mind.

Mosby also used certain techniques or skills that reduced the impact that chance had on his operation:

1. Mosby set up a system of rendezvous points where his men would meet for the next mission. On this raid, Mosby established the rendezvous

⁸⁰Clausewitz, On War, pp. 101-104.

⁸¹Ibid.

point initially at Rector's Crossroads and the next day at Dover, where the mission finally started.

2. He knew the terrain and used it to his advantage. Mosby already knew where most, if not all, the obscure trails were. He also used scouts who were more knowledgeable of the terrain than himself.

3. The rainy weather helped Mosby's operation by obscuring the Union's observation and reducing its alertness and discipline. The weather also slowed Mosby's operation. Mosby, however, correctly recognized that the inclement weather would be a much greater advantage than a hinderance.

4. Mosby used as much intelligence information about the enemy's positions as he could obtain. He had positive information concerning the enemy's locations and he probably knew how to get through the picket line without Ames' assistance. Mosby may have placed Ames forward for two reasons. First, he was a Yankee sergeant who had negotiated the picket line a week or two earlier, and probably knew many of the techniques of the Union pickets. As such, he may have had a better chance of avoiding the pickets or avoiding capture by the pickets. Second, if Mosby had led his unit through the picket line, and he was captured, the mission would have failed. Furthermore, who would take charge of the operation and lead the men to safety? Ames was the one who knew the area best but some men were skeptical of his loyalty and experience. Therefore, Mosby probably believed that, should something go wrong, he would be required to lead his men and rescue the operation. Placing himself second in the column was the best way to do that.

5. Mosby planned the mission from start to finish. He probably started thinking about it as early as 28 January when Wyndham captured three of his men at Middleburg. He knew how he wanted to get to Fairfax and how many men he would need (he had to wait a day because he did not have enough). He knew what he wanted to accomplish and how he would return to friendly lines. His planning was flexible enough to allow him to change portions of the operation as new situations developed.

6. The raid's success demonstrated that Mosby's men were disciplined, loyal, and technically proficient in basic skills. The unit maintained noise, light, and weapon discipline, and the men behaved maturely and professionally. Mosby's unit followed him without any knowledge of the operation other than the fact that Mosby was leading them and that was sufficient for them. Finally, the unit travelled cross-country at night, in extreme darkness, without a compass or lantern to guide them.

7. The fact that Mosby told his men nothing about the operation demonstrated Mosby's strong regard for operational security. He made certain that the enemy could not learn about his plan before its execution. On the other hand, he also took a chance by not informing his men. The fact that his men did not know the mission's purpose or Mosby's intentions, prevented them from knowing what action to take in an emergency. For example, when his column separated in the woods, his men debated their next course of action. Fortunately, they made the right decision. But Mosby may have had other reasons for not informing his men about the plan: First, if he had to abort the mission he could still be relatively certain that the plan was secure. Second, he knew his men would trust him but they might

have some strong reservations if they had known how dangerous the mission was or that Ames played a major role. Third, if he had said he was leading his men on a very dangerous mission and it aborted, his men may have had grounds to question his judgement in the future. Finally, if Mosby decided to end the mission because he no longer believed it would work or he determined that the plan was faulty, his men would be unaware that he had made an error in planning.

8. Mosby had planned to conduct the operation entirely during the hours of darkness. He knew if his unit was still behind the Union lines after sunrise, they could easily be identified as an enemy force.

9. Deception played a major part in the operation: First, the raiders used dark gum coats to help disguise their uniforms. Second, as they entered and exited Fairfax, they used the Fairfax Station Road to deceive the enemy concerning their actual route. Third, Mosby deceived Brig. Gen. Stoughton into thinking that his situation was hopeless. Fourth, the raiders used the name of the 5th New York Cavalry to cover their operation. Finally, while Mosby's men skirted the defenses of Centreville, he knew his men could deceive the Centreville outposts into believing that a Union patrol was passing.

10. Mosby used obstacles in his favor. If he could force the Union to negotiate the same obstacles he faced, his pursuers would have less of an opportunity to overtake his column. He probably believed that the restrictive woods and Cub Run would have been as great a hinderance to the Union as it was for him.

11 The flexibility of Mosby's planning has already been stated, but he was also flexible in executing his plan. Examples include: changing the day of the operation, starting the mission later, capturing Stoughton instead of Wyndham, deciding not to burn the military stores, and changing his exit route.

12. Mosby avoided confrontations that could jeopardize the mission. He would rather use guile and intelligence than force. The raiders could have caused more damage, created more confusion, and had a greater impact by shooting and burning rather than just capturing. Another example was the incident at Centreville where Mosby could have used brute force to penetrate the unsuspecting enemy rather than ride slowly around them. Mosby, however, intended to complete his mission with the same number of men he started with. And the safest means of accomplishing that was to capture key personnel, inflict psychological damage, and restrict physical damage. This may appear to contradict the stubborn, combative personality he demonstrated earlier, and perhaps it does. But, the fact is, in his first two months of operation he and his men seldom killed or wounded anyone.⁸² Mosby would rather capture than injure his enemy, and his men conducted themselves accordingly. There are a number of significant reasons for his actions: First, capturing the enemy was more agreeable to Mosby's chivalrous and noble character than wounding or killing. Second, when the enemy learned that Mosby would rather capture than kill, and that he treated his captives fairly, then his victims were less likely to risk their lives in resisting his attacks. This is especially true if they have reason to hope for

⁸²Williamson, *Mosby's Rangers*, pp. 13-51. In Mosby's first seven major operations, his unit captured 117 men, killed five and wounded none.

an immediate parole. Third, the enemy's pursuit of Mosby would be less ruthless if they realized they were dealing with an honorable and chivalrous man. Finally, the civilian population would tend to support Mosby more if he applied moderation to his operations.

13. Mosby used 100 percent of his personnel resources. At this point in Mosby's partisan career, volunteers were scarce. Therefore, Mosby had to use every man who volunteered his services. This probably taxed Mosby's leadership abilities because he had few men to choose from and had to select the right men for the right jobs. Mosby, however, did just that. He selected his best men for the most important mission, escorting Stoughton. He also selected the duties for the other men as scouts, or guards, or raiders. As a result, each man had an assigned task which he accomplished.

In summary, this section on Mosby's raid of Fairfax Court House has identified the situations leading up to the raid, the weaknesses and strengths of both armies, the actual operation of the raid, and its impact on both the Union and the Confederacy. It also pointed out the role that chance played in the operation, some of Mosby's leadership qualities, and finally, it outlined some of the techniques that Mosby used to make the raid a success. This raid was Mosby's genesis. After this, Mosby received many more recruits and conducted many operations, some of which were probably more important. However, no other operation would become as famous, or as personally satisfying to Mosby, as his raid on Fairfax Court House.

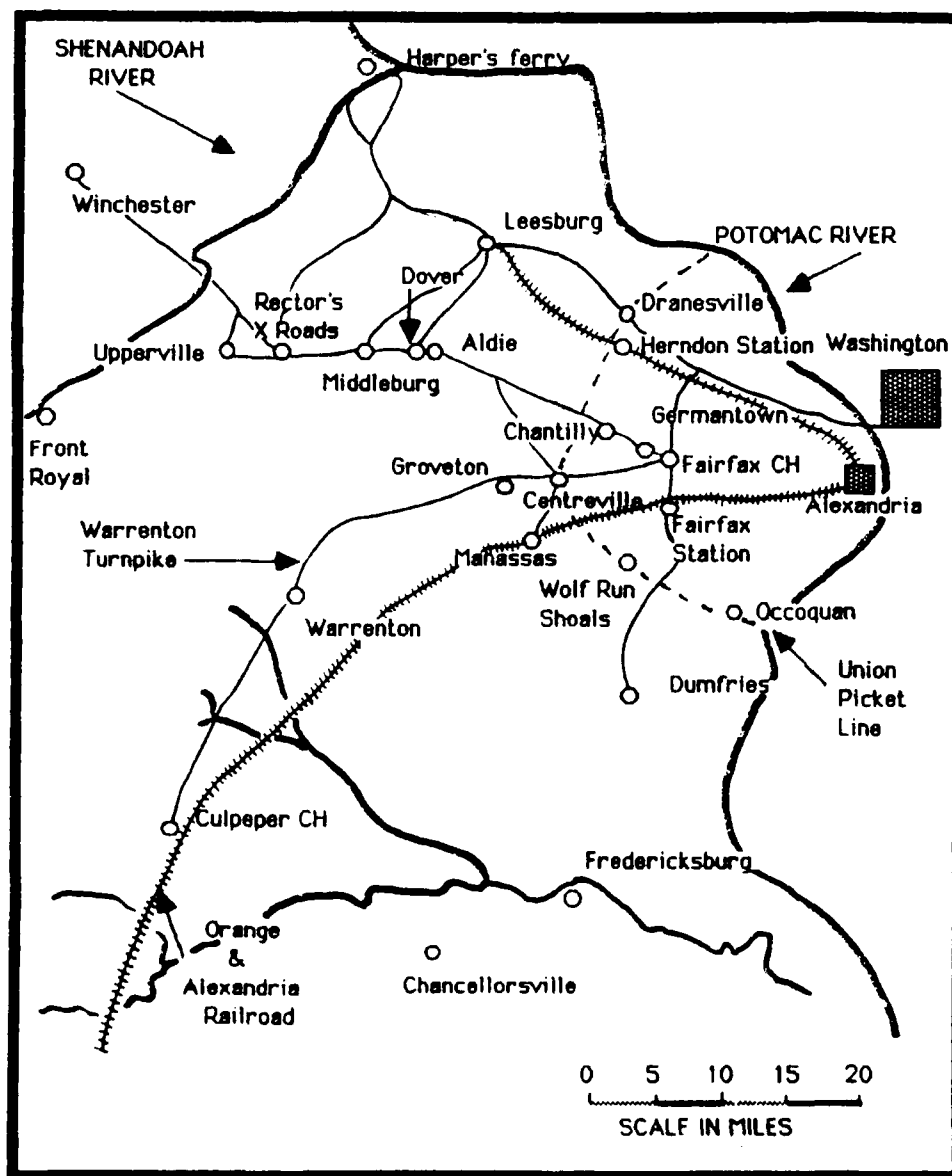


FIGURE 2
UNION PICKET LINE, MARCH 1863

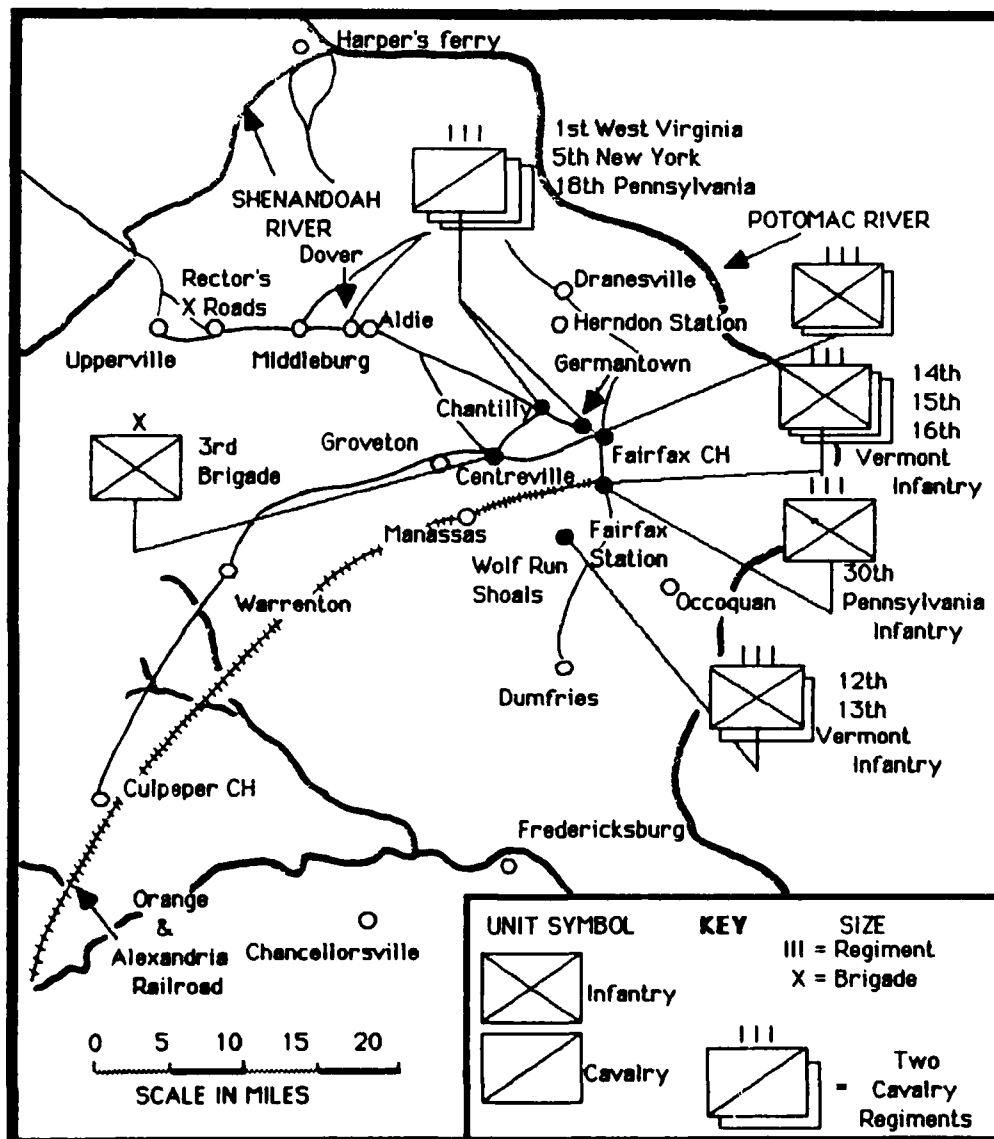


FIGURE 3
UNION FORCES IN THE VICINITY OF FAIRFAX COURT HOUSE
MARCH 1863

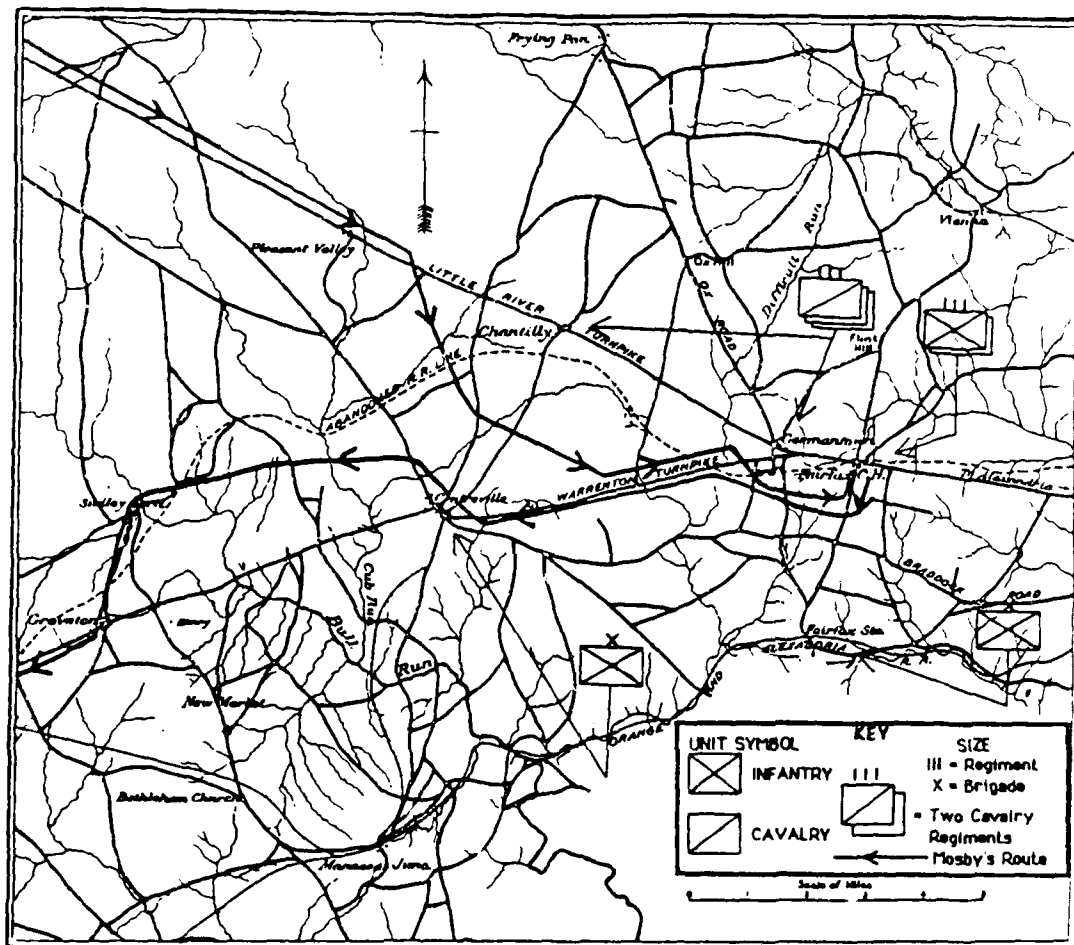


FIGURE 4
FAIRFAX COURT HOUSE RAID

CHAPTER 3

SECTION 2

ATTACK ON LOUDOUN HEIGHTS

9-10 JANUARY 1864

In January 1864, the military situation in Virginia appeared surprisingly similar to the previous year with Union and Confederate armies at a standstill due to another harsh winter. Their locations were also the same as they were in 1863, with the Union's Army of the Potomac encamped on the north side of the Rappahannock River, and the Confederate army encamped on the south (see Figure 5, page 98). Once again both armies were rebuilding and preparing for the war's resumption in spring.

While the situation looked the same on the surface, a closer examination would have revealed some serious battle scars. The war had resumed in spring 1863, with Lee's army winning the battle of Chancellorsville, Virginia, on 1-4 May and thus neutralizing another Union drive toward Richmond. The Confederates then attempted to exploit their success by launching a counteroffensive into Union territory. Lee's army pushed northward through the Shenandoah Valley and the narrow Maryland panhandle and collided with Gen. George Meade's Army of the Potomac at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The collision, which lasted from 1-3 July, was costly to the Union and devastating to the Confederates. By mid-July, Lee's army was

back in the lower Shenandoah Valley and, shortly thereafter, both armies reoccupied their positions along the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers.

In October and November, each army took its turn attacking its opponent's western flank. Lee had tried a wide sweep to the left, through Culpeper and Warrenton, Virginia, but was checked by the strong defenses at Centreville. The Union retaliated with a counterattack through the Culpeper area but was blocked by the Confederates at the Rapidan River. By the end of November 1863, the armies were back where they had started, along the Rapidan and Rappahannock.¹

By 1 January 1864, the Union's main defenses were arrayed in the following manner (see Figure 5). (1) The Army of the Potomac had occupied defensive positions, for the winter, along the Rappahannock River. (2) The Department of Washington occupied defensive positions in and around Washington and west to Centreville, Virginia. (3) Two divisions of the Department of West Virginia occupied defensive positions along the Potomac River. The First Division was centered on Harper's Ferry, and the Fourth Division was farther west at Martinsburg, West Virginia.² (4) The remainder of Virginia was patrolled by Union cavalry brigades belonging to the departments and divisions.

Throughout 1863, Mosby's area of operations remained centered around Middleburg, Virginia, the same area that the Union cavalry patrolled. Mosby's operating area extended east of Fairfax Court House, north to the Potomac River, and south to Bealton Station, Virginia. The only exception to

¹Fletcher Pratt, A Short History of the Civil War, (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1951), pp. 254-259.

²OR, vol. XXXIII, pp. 479-480.

this was when Mosby raided north into Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, while Lee was at Gettysburg.³

After Mosby's raid on Herndon Station in March 1863, his unit continued to harrass the Union forces. Between March and December, Mosby's Partisan Rangers were responsible for thirty-four Union soldiers killed; an unknown number of Union soldiers wounded; over 260 Union soldiers captured; over 572 horses and mules captured; one train and one bridge destroyed; and one set of Union Gen. Joseph Hooker's battle plans captured. During the same period, Mosby's unit suffered twelve men killed, forty-four wounded and sixteen captured.⁴

In addition to Mosby's raids, the significant events of 1863 that pertain to Mosby include: (1) On 24 March, all Confederate cavalry scouts and particularly Mosby's unit were forbidden by regulation to grant paroles for prisoners of war or deserters.⁵ (2) On 4 April, Mosby was promoted to Major. (3) On 10 June 1863, Mosby's Partisan Rangers officially became the 43rd Battalion, Virginia Cavalry. Initially the battalion included a headquarters and sixty men in Company A.⁶ (4) On 24 August 1863, Mosby received a bullet wound in his thigh during a raid. After Mosby's wounding, Lieut. Thomas Turner assumed command of the battalion and conducted two successful operations. Mosby recovered from his wound and returned to his command in mid-September. (5) By 1 October, Mosby had enough men to form a second company and, as a result, Company B was

³Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, pp. 50-117.

⁴Ibid.

⁵OR, vol. XXV, pt. II, p. 857.

⁶Mosby, War Reminiscences, p. 157.

established with sixty men. (6) On 15 December 1863, Company C was organized.⁷

The growth of Mosby's battalion was slow because he was forbidden to recruit any men as conscripts who were eligible for regular service.⁸ Therefore, the volunteers he recruited and accepted were boys, too young for conscription; the farmers who were exempt from conscription; young men from Maryland; foreign soldiers of fortune; and old, ex-officers.⁹ Mosby said he preferred to recruit: "mere boys, most of them unmarried and hence without fear or anxiety for the effect their daring would have on their wives and children."¹⁰

When Mosby organized the companies of his battalion, he was still required to permit his units to elect their officers. Mosby, however, felt this was a bad practice. He wrote:

In compliance with law, I had to go through the form of an election. But I really appointed the officers, and told the men to vote for them. This was my rule as long as I had a command, and with two or three exceptions their conduct vindicated my judgment.¹¹

On 1 January 1864, six days before the Loudoun Heights attack, Mosby ordered his men to rendezvous for a meeting in Rectortown, Virginia, a few miles south of Middleburg. However, Rectortown was temporarily occupied by a force of eighty Union cavalrymen, who were searching for Mosby. This

⁷Ibid. The unit strength of Company C is undocumented but was probably sixty men.

⁸Stapel, Rebel, pp. 90-91.

⁹Munson, Reminiscences, p. 8.

¹⁰Jones, Ranger Mosby, p. 311.

¹¹Mosby, War Reminiscences, pp. 157-158.

force was a detachment from a battalion of Maryland's Potomac Home Brigade Cavalry, assigned to the defenses at Harper's Ferry. As Mosby's men rode toward the meeting site, they noticed the presence of Union troops and maintained their distance. Mosby, as more and more of his men arrived, decided to gather them for a raid against the intruders.

Meanwhile, Mosby's Company B, commanded by Capt. William Smith, was approaching the northern end of town. They noticed the Union force departing the southern end of town and decided to harass its rear. By the time Mosby could gather enough men to pursue the Union detachment, the thirty-two men of Company B had already moved through the town and were on the enemy's trail. The Union force, unaware it was being followed, turned off the road and moved northeastward across the fields in the direction of Middleburg. Smith's company also rode cross-country and came out on the enemy's left flank. The lead scouts of Smith's company immediately opened fire and the remainder of the company charged into the Union flank. The Union commander's horse was shot in the first volley and, as a result, its rider was the first to be captured. In reaction to the Confederate charge, the Union cavalry broke formation and fled toward Middleburg. By the time Mosby arrived on the scene, Capt. Smith had the situation in hand with four Union soldiers killed, twelve wounded, forty-one prisoners, and fifty horses captured. In the affair, two of Smith's men were wounded.

The rout at Middleburg was not representative of the Maryland unit's reputation. On the contrary, the battalion--named "Cole's Cavalry" and commanded by Maj. Henry A. Cole--was very experienced in cavalry operations and usually successful. Its first combat operation was in the

Shenandoah Valley on 11 March 1862. It continued to operate in the Shenandoah until September when it moved to engage Gen. Stuart's cavalry at Leesburg, Virginia. On 2 September 1862, the battalion suffered heavily in killed and wounded and withdrew to Harper's Ferry. In December 1862, Cole's Cavalry resumed its operations in the Shenandoah Valley and, later, during the Gettysburg campaign, harrassed the rear of Lee's Army. Cole's unit was credited with burning one of Lee's bridges; intercepting orders from Lee to a subordinate, Gen. R. S. Ewell; and capturing large amounts of Confederate supplies. The latter months of 1863 included their capture of a Confederate cavalry company, attacks on Gen. John B. Imboden's brigade, and a few raids in the Shenandoah Valley. By 1 January 1864, the battalion was the only Union unit in the vicinity of Harper's Ferry, camped on the Virginia side of the Potomac.¹²

A few days after the raid on Cole's detachment, a blizzard hit Northern Virginia dropping heavy snow, and bringing bitter cold. On the night of 6 January, Lieut. Turner, of Mosby's Company A, embarked on an operation that would take advantage of the coldest night any Virginia resident could remember. With the temperature below zero, Turner led a raid on a Union outpost's grand guard, near Warrenton, Virginia. By 4:00 a. m. on 7 January, many of Turner's twenty men had had their hands and feet frost-bitten and most could barely use their pistols.¹³ Nevertheless, the cold also affected the Union outpost and provided them with a false sense of security from

¹²L. Allison Wilmer, J. H. Jarret, and Geo. W. F. Vernon, History and Roster of Maryland Volunteers, War of 1861-5, (Baltimore: Press of Guggenheimer, Weil and Company, 1898), vol I, pp. 655-660.

¹³J. Marshall Crawford, Mosby and His Men, (New York: G. W. Carleton and Company, 1867), pp. 148-149.

Confederate raiders. As a result, Turner and his men found the grand guard of the Third Pennsylvania Cavalry asleep in their tents, totally unprepared for "visitors." When Turner attacked, the commander of the surprised Union force tried to rally his men, but was immediately shot down. When the shooting ended, Lieut. Turner's raid had netted eight Union wounded, eighteen prisoners, and forty-three horses captured.¹⁴ Turner had no men injured in the fight. However, one man lost some toes to frost-bite, another lost four fingers, and a third had both hands and feet frozen.¹⁵

On the same day as Turner's raid, Mosby received a message from Capt. Frank Stringfellow, one of Gen. Stuart's veteran scouts. Stringfellow suggested that he and Mosby combine forces to capture Cole's battalion. He had noticed that Cole's unit was conducting picket duty on Loudoun Heights, a high bluff opposite Harper's Ferry, on the Virginia side of the Potomac. A closer examination revealed that Cole's unit was only picketing one road, the turnpike to Hillsboro. This meant that the battalion had to be vulnerable from other directions. Stringfellow searched for a vulnerable avenue, found it, and wrote Mosby that the Maryland cavalry camp was in a position where it could be captured at night without firing a shot.¹⁶ The operation had to be a complete surprise, however, and had to be executed in such a way that the raiders could flee before Union help arrived from Harper's Ferry, only a mile away.

¹⁴Regimental History Committee, History of the Third Pennsylvania Cavalry, (Philadelphia: Franklin Printing Company, 1905), pp. 396-397.

¹⁵Crawford, Mosby and His Men, p. 150.

¹⁶ibid.

The idea was attractive to Mosby for these reasons: First, the unit that Capt. Smith had easily routed six days earlier came from four of Cole's companies. Second, Lieut. Turner's quick victory in the deep snow and bitter cold demonstrated the Union's complacency and vulnerability during bad weather. Third, Maj. Cole was extremely unpopular with the residents of the area.¹⁷ Fourth, Capt. Stringfellow was a well-known and respected scout and had worked with Mosby before.¹⁸ Finally, it had been almost a year since Mosby's unit had been organized. What better way to celebrate his unit's first anniversary than by successfully completing its largest and most daring enterprise?

Mosby believed that Stringfellow's plan had merit, decided to execute it, and called for a noontime meeting of his command at Upperville on Saturday, 9 January. He planned to execute the attack at night with as many men as they could muster. Mosby would meet Stringfellow and his men enroute and have Stringfellow lead the entire group to Cole's camp. He knew that Cole had between 175 to 200 men and also knew the layout of the camp. Mosby would have his men surround the camp while the enemy was sleeping and, at his signal, the men would attack. Simultaneously, one squad of Mosby's men would capture the picket on the Hillsborough Turnpike and Stringfellow's force would attack Cole's headquarters. The fact that there was no cavalry at Harper's Ferry would give them sufficient time to complete the mission before local Union reinforcements could react.¹⁹

¹⁷Jones, Ranger Mosby, p. 164.

¹⁸Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, p. 107-110.

¹⁹OR, vol XXXIII, pp. 15-16.

The temperature in Upperville was near zero on the morning of 9 January 1864. The snow was a foot deep and more was expected.²⁰ Mosby's men began arriving in town, but by noon, only 106 men were present.²¹ Perhaps some of the men remembered what happened to their comrades who had lost toes and fingers the week before. Each company was equally represented and Mosby must have been satisfied with the number because he gave the order to mount at three o'clock. Mosby's men rode north out of Upperville, through Union, Virginia, to the small town of Woodgrove (see Figure 6, page 99). The column halted, entered the mansion of Ranger Henry Heaton, and were greeted with a blazing fire in each room and a warm supper. Heaton had ridden ahead, at Mosby's request, to prepare his house for the riders. Mosby's men waited at Heaton's home for three hours until Stringfellow's courier arrived, as prearranged. The courier brought a message informing Mosby that Stringfellow and his men had conducted one last reconnaissance and found everything favorable for the attack.

Mosby's men mounted their horses and, with a clear sky, began their ride northward. The men rode for hours through the bitter cold. Every so often a rider would jump from his saddle and trot alongside his horse in order to get his circulation going again. Other times, a rider would place the reins in his teeth so he could warm his hands under the saddle blankets. Undoubtedly the men were miserable, but they all remained silent.

Sometime in the early hours of the morning, the column rendezvoused with Stringfellow and his men, and then continued their march. A short

²⁰Crawford, Mosby and His Men, p. 156.

²¹Jones, Ranger Mosby, p. 165. The rolls of Mosby's battalion averaged at least sixty men per company.

time later, the column stopped for about two hours and fed their horses while Mosby and Stringfellow rode on to reconnoiter the enemy's camp. When the two returned, the column mounted and resumed its march north to the Potomac River. Upon intercepting the frozen river, they turned left and followed the river bank toward Harper's Ferry, a mile and a half away.

Mosby's men were unaware of the purpose of their operation. Therefore, when they could see the fires from a camp on the opposite bank, they believed that was their objective. Later, when they heard the whistle of a locomotive in the distance, they guessed that the camp had been too strong and they would attack the train instead.²²

As the column neared Harper's Ferry, the men could identify the large bluff of Maryland Heights across the river, an extension of the Blue Ridge Mountain chain. Soon, they were able to see the high bluff of Loudoun Heights on the Virginia side of the river. As they neared this massive spur, the column turned away from the river bank, avoided a Union picket and headed directly toward the spur. Stringfellow led the column into a pine thicket and began a slow climb around the north end of the spur (see Figure 7, page 100). Now they could see the lights of Harper's Ferry less than a half-mile away. The column continued winding westward around the spur until they were directly above the bridge over the Shenandoah River. They moved out of the thicket and advanced farther to the left, halting below a wooded cliff. The men were allowed to close up and then each man dismounted and began to scale the cliff.²³ The climb was difficult for men and horses alike, and if the men had not been able to grab onto the shrubs

²²Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, p. 126.

²³Jones, Ranger Mosby, pp. 166-167.

and trees, it would have been impossible. And impossible is exactly what the Union soldiers believed.

Mosby was the first to complete the climb. At the top, he found a large expanse of Union tents, but no movement or noise--it was four o'clock and everyone was asleep! Mosby wedged his men in between the first row of tents, placed Capt. Smith in charge of gathering the remainder of the raiders, and quickly ran to look over the camp. When he returned, most of his men were at the top. Mosby gathered his subordinate leaders and gave them their instructions. Stringfellow would go to the house, on the opposite end of the hill, where Cole had his headquarters. Capt. Smith's men were ordered to move to the stables and secure the mules and horses.²⁴ One of Mosby's most trusted scouts, R. P. Montjoy, was given the mission of returning to the bottom of the hill with six men and capturing the picket at the camp's entrance.²⁵ Mosby would take charge of the remaining men and capture the sleeping occupants of the tents.²⁶ Before he released his subordinate leaders, Mosby cautioned them to make certain that their men moved along the camp's perimeter, staying out of the center, to avoid getting caught in a possible crossfire. The leaders acknowledged their instructions, organized their men, mounted their horses, and moved into position.

Mosby waited for his leaders to get to their destinations and then began stationing his men along the first row of tents. Suddenly, from the opposite end of the hill, a gun shot broke the silence. Mosby tried to hurry his men

²⁴Scott, Partisan Life, pp 179-180.

²⁵Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, p. 127.

²⁶Scott, Partisan Life, pp 179-180.

along the tents before the Union soldiers had a chance to realize what was happening. But, at that instant, opposite Mosby's position, a group of horsemen came charging over the hill into the center of the camp, yelling and shooting. Mosby ordered his mounted men to charge and repulse the attackers, but by the time Mosby learned that the approaching horsemen were Stringfellow's men, six of them had been shot down.²⁷

In the following moments, panic and confusion would seize the entire camp. Some of the Union soldiers began firing through the tent flaps at the rangers. Mosby's men then rode through the camp riddling the tents with bullets from their pistols. Orders and pleas sang out in unison. The men in the first row of tents were screaming, "The camp is yours! We surrender! Stop firing!"²⁸ In other areas of the camp, orders were shouted, "Fire at every man on horseback! Men, do not take to your horses!"²⁹ Capt. Smith shouted, "Fire the tents, and shoot 'em by the light!"³⁰

Some of the Union soldiers had escaped their tents and, organized by their officers, began firing volleys from the edge of the camp, the stables, and the headquarters. Mosby and his officers tried to rally his men to organize a mounted charge, but the resistance had increased to the point that many of the raiders would not enter the camp.

The Confederates were at a disadvantage. The Union soldiers knew that the mounted men were Confederates. Therefore, they could fire at anyone on horseback and be certain the target was enemy. The horsemen had a greater

²⁷Ibid, 180.

²⁸Crawford, Mosby and His Men, p. 159.

²⁹Frank A. Burr and Richard J. Hinton, The Life of Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, (Providence, RI: J. A. and R. A. Reid, 1888), p. 140.

³⁰Ibid, p. 141.

dilemma. The Union soldiers were dismounted, but so were some of Mosby's men. Therefore, when the horsemen returned fire, their target could be enemy or one of their own comrades. Furthermore, because of the confusion caused by Stringfellow's men, the dismounted raiders could not be absolutely certain that all the horsemen were friendly. Also, when the Confederate's pistols required reloading, the men had great difficulty in doing so. This was due to the long period of time their hands were exposed to the extreme cold. Conversely, the Union did not have this problem. Some of the Union soldiers were only exposed to the cold for a short time, and some, in the tents, were not exposed at all. Therefore, the larger Union force was able to discharge a greater volume of fire.

Lieut. Turner, who had assumed command when Mosby had been wounded and who had led the raid on the outpost only a few days earlier, was shot as he charged the camp. Two of his men helped him on his horse and escorted him to a house a few miles away.

After the signal gun was discharged at Harper's Ferry, Mosby realized that reinforcements would soon be enroute to the camp. He knew his situation was hopeless. More and more men were dropping in the snow around him and crying for help. As much as Mosby hated to admit defeat, he finally decided that his men had had enough, and shouted for his men to withdraw toward Hillsborough.

Some of the men withdrew and some never heard the order. One of Mosby's men, Charlie Paxton, had been so badly wounded that he had been unable to move. He screamed to his friends, pleading for "God's sake not to

leave him."³¹ Capt. Smith heard Paxton's pleas and tried to pull him up onto his own horse, but was unable to do so. Smith sent Ranger John Grayson, to get another horse for Paxton. A third ranger, William Chapman, explains what happened:

A few seconds after he [Grayson] left there was a shot fired at us from a group not twenty steps distant. Capt. Smith and I returned the fire, and then a volley was fired at us. The flash from the volley for a moment blinded me and a feeling of thankfulness that we had escaped, possessed me, when suddenly Smith leaped upward from the saddle and fell on the right side of his horse, . . . both feet hung in the stirrups with his head on the snow. I sprung from my horse and asked him how he was shot, but he gave no reply. I endeavored to lift him into the saddle but he was too heavy for me. I . . . tried to unbutton his overcoat but my hands had become so cold after removing my gloves to go into the fight that I could not unbutton a single button. I knocked his feet from the stirrups, mounted my horse and led his horse from the camp.³²

When Grayson returned, he reported to Chapman that Mosby had ordered a withdrawal. The two rode off to join the remainder of their friends, leaving Smith dead and Paxton to die.³³

The 34th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, from Harper's Ferry, marched to rescue Cole's Cavalry at the "double-quick." When they arrived, they found much of the snow covered with blood, but the attackers were gone:

When night lifted and day dawned upon that battle-field. . . . The dead lay upon the ground frozen stiff by the terrible cold. The severely wounded complained bitterly of the frost, and the bullet-pierced tents of the men that did the fighting were full of weary, powder-stained veterans, suffering sorely from the effects of

³¹Crawford, Mosby and His Men, p. 161.

³²Siepel, Rebel, pp. 105-106.

³³See Appendix I for an interesting account of Tom Paxton's final hours.

frozen feet, of which they were unmindful until the battle was won. . . . A large number of the [Cole's] command was sent to the hospital with frozen feet, and two amputations were necessary. The suffering of these brave men did not stop with the battle.³⁴

Mosby's column withdrew toward Hillsborough. Two miles from Cole's camp, at the house of a Southern sympathizer, Mosby visited the severely wounded Lieut. Turner. "It was an affecting spectacle to see the men gathered around the wounded officer, to look for the last time on him whom they had followed in so many fights."³⁵ Lieut. Turner died five days later.

Mosby's men returned to Woodgrove by dawn the next day, 11 January. Mosby immediately dispatched Chapman and Montjoy to return to Cole's camp under a flag of truce to recover Smith's body. Later that day, they reached the pickets guarding Cole's camp and made Mosby's request known. Maj. Cole replied that he would give Smith's body to a citizen or Smith's family but would not, under any circumstances, give it to Mosby. He added that if Mosby really wanted the body, then "he'd better try again to surprise the camp on Loudoun Heights."³⁶ A few days later, Smith's wife arrived at Cole's camp and claimed her husband's body.³⁷

During Mosby's attack on Loudoun Heights, Cole's battalion had four men killed, sixteen wounded, six captured, and fifty horses captured. Mosby's battalion had four men killed, seven wounded (of which four died later), and one captured.³⁸

³⁴Burr, Sheridan, p. 142.

³⁵Scott, Portison Life, p. 181.

³⁶Jones, Gray Ghosts, p. 213.

³⁷Crowford, Mosby and His Men, pp. 164-165.

³⁸QR, vol. XXXIII, pp. 15-18.

Mosby's attack resulted in an emotional victory for Cole's battalion. When the operation began, the Union battalion was at a great disadvantage-- it had almost been captured in toto. During the attack, however, three factors allowed Cole's unit to overcome this disadvantage and repulse the raiders. First, the gun shot awakened the camp before Mosby could completely surround it. Second, the men and especially the leaders of the second row of tents refused to surrender. Third, Mosby's plan required total surprise, and when the element of surprise was lost he had no alternative plan.

In addition to the emotional lift from its "come-from-behind" victory, Cole's battalion also received other benefits. (1) The battalion believed it had repulsed a force of four hundred men, double its own size.³⁹ (2) For this fight, Cole's battalion was later designated a regiment--the 1st Regiment, Potomac Home Brigade. (3) Maj. Cole became Col. Cole, the officer who rallied the men became a lieutenant colonel, and many others in the battalion were promoted accordingly. (4) The battalion received a commendatory order from the General-in-Chief, Gen. H. W. Halleck, for its gallantry in repelling Mosby's assault. The order was read to the Union army and, "It was the only instance during the Rebellion that such conspicuous commendation was awarded from the headquarters of the army to anything like such a force as that commanded by Major Cole."⁴⁰

The outcome of the attack was an emotional disaster for Mosby and his men. They had come close enough to "taste" victory and then lost it. Mosby must have been elated as he watched his men surround the first row of tents

³⁹Ibid, p. 17.

⁴⁰Burr, Sheridan, pp. 143-144

and the remainder of his men enroute to the others. Conversely, his disappointment must have been devastating as he watched the perfectly executed operation turn sour. Mosby's unit lost two of its best leaders. Lieut. Turner, the acting commander of Company A, and Capt. Smith, the commander of Company B, "were without a doubt the two most efficient officers in the Battalion. . . . Both men were universal favorites."⁴¹ The Confederates knew that they had killed at least one of their own men by mistake. The uncertainty of how some of the others died must have added to their grief. Later, they conceded that three of their comrades were killed by friendly fire.

The Union refused to return the bodies of their fallen comrades and subsequently arrested members of the family. When Mrs. Smith tried to claim her husband's body, her parents accompanied her. All three of Capt. Smith's family were ordered under arrest by the post commander, Union Brig. Gen. Jeremiah C. Sullivan. When Mrs. Smith and her parents were freed two days later, Mrs. Smith had to beg the post commander for her husband's body. She finally received the body minus his personal effects and clothing.⁴²

The same time Mosby's operation went awry, some senior Confederate officers were recommending that partisan warfare be outlawed. The failure

⁴¹Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, p. 129.

⁴²Crawford, Mosby and His Men, pp. 160-167. Mr. Crawford cites Gen. James A. Mulligan as being the post commander of the area surrounding Loudoun Heights. The QR, vol. XXXIII, p. 479, reports that Gen. Mulligan was the commander of New Creek, West Virginia, some fifty miles away. Gen. Sullivan was the post commander of Harper's Ferry and was Maj. Cole's division commander. Therefore, Gen. Sullivan is probably the post commander involved with Mrs. Smith.

of Mosby's operation added credence to this idea, thus adding to the anxiety of both Mosby and his men.

On 11 January, Confederate Brig. Gen. Thomas L. Rosser wrote to Gen. Lee that partisan warfare hindered the Confederate cause:

Without discipline, order, or organization, they [partisens] roam broadcast over the country, a band of thieves, stealing, pillaging, plundering, and doing every manner of mischief and crime. They are a terror to the citizens and an injury to the cause. . . . Major-General [Jubal A.] Early can give useful information concerning the evils of these organizations. If he cannot, Maj. Gen. Fitz. Lee can.⁴³

Gen. Stuart forwarded Gen. Rosser's message to Gen. Robert E. Lee with an indorsement stating that most of the partisan units, except Mosby's, were detrimental. Gen. Lee forwarded his comments to the Confederate Secretary of War, James A. Seddon, recommending the partisan corps be abolished.

Considering the above, Mosby and his men must have believed their failure was as disastrous as the French defeat at Waterloo. Their degree of despondency made them unfit for duty for almost a month.⁴⁴ Mosby waited for three weeks before sending his report to Gen. Stuart. In it he praised his deceased officers and wrote that his loss was severe, "more so in worth than the number of the slain."⁴⁵

Mosby maintained a low profile over the next three weeks, he and his men were genuinely distressed about the loss at Loudoun Heights, and Mosby and all partisans could not afford any negative publicity while the fate of partisan warfare was being decided in Richmond. Mosby's late report to

⁴³QR, vol. XXXIII, pp. 1081-1082.

⁴⁴Siepel, Rebel, p. 106.

⁴⁵QR, vol. XXXIII, p. 16.

Stuart also supports this idea. Mosby delayed forwarding his report so that it would not add "fuel" to Brig. Gen. Rosser's anti-partisan message. Mosby also worded the report in a manner that de-emphasized his unit's failures. He began the 1 February report emphasizing Lieut. Turner's successful 6 January operation. Then he explained how perfectly the Loudoun Heights raid went, emphasizing Stringfellow's failure as the reason for the operation's downfall. Next, he eulogized his gallant officers by emphasizing their worth to the Confederacy: "two of the noblest and bravest officers of this army, who thus sealed a life of devotion and of sacrifice to the cause that they loved." Finally, he ended his report on a positive note:

In numerous other affairs with the enemy between 75 and 100 horses and mules have been captured, about 40 men killed, wounded, and captured. A party of this command also threw one of the enemy's trains off the track, causing a great smash-up.⁴⁶

Mosby must have been referring to some of his earlier operations. His reference to the forty men killed, wounded, or captured and the destruction of the train are not supported by the records of the month of January 1864.

Gen. Stuart prepared and sent an indorsement to Mosby's late report. In this indorsement, he lauds Mosby's accomplishments and dedicated service since 1861. Then he praises Mosby's deceased officers and, finally, he demands Mosby's promotion to lieutenant colonel. Stuart worded his indorsement in this manner in order to boost Mosby's morale and to help Mosby keep his job as a legally authorized partisan. Gen. Lee had earlier sent his recommendation for Mosby's promotion and added that Mosby has greatly served the Confederacy and should be permitted to continue.⁴⁷ On 17

⁴⁶Ibid, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁷Ibid, pp. 16, 1113.

February 1864, as a result of Mosby's attack on Loudoun Heights, and his superiors' efforts to retain his "legal" partisan services, Maj. Mosby became Lt. Col. Mosby.

Before the attack on Loudoun Heights, Mosby had been in the habit of attacking the enemy's camps at night and the results of these night operations had been excellent. After the attack on Cole's camp:

... he could not be induced to entertain such a proposition, except under peculiar circumstances. This resolution was not arrived at so much from fear of the enemy's inflicting injury on him, as from the danger of his own men's firing into one another.⁴⁸

Once again, Mosby's success depended upon two factors: luck and skill. The attack on Cole's camp had been well-executed up to the time of the unexpected gun shot. Even after the shot had occurred, Mosby and his men could and probably would have completed their mission before the Union forces could react. This shot, however, became the catalyst for an uncontrolled chain reaction. As a result of the shot, Stringfellow's men rode into the camp and caused such confusion that the Union was provided the opportunity to seize the initiative. Mosby had ordered that no one was to enter the camp from the direction that Stringfellow used. Therefore, when Mosby and his men saw the riders charging toward them, firing and yelling, Mosby ordered his men to return the fire and charge the camp. When his men intermingled with the Union tents, the Union force took advantage of the confusion and took control of the situation.

Why was the shot fired? No one knows for certain. One of Mosby's men believed that, "Stringfellow and his men came charging and yelling and

⁴⁸Crawford, Mosby and His Men, p. 167.

firing into the camp, having made no effort or attempt to catch Cole or the other officers."⁴⁹ Another Ranger offered these two possibilities:

... in front of this house [Cole's headquarters] where the officers were sleeping, there was a stable which was supposed to contain the officer's horses, and around were several army wagons with mules tied to them. Some few of... [Stringfellow's] men left the ranks to secure the mules; and it was supposed by many of us that they spoke rather loud, and that the officers were aroused, and a shot was fired from the house; or by Stringfellow's men leaving him after he got into the house, ... ascending the mountain and charging into the camp.⁵⁰

One historian, V. C. Jones, offered the possibility of the shot being fired due to a "numbed finger pressed too tightly on a sensitive trigger."⁵¹ Author Christopher A. Newcomer, writing about Cole's battalion, says that the shot was fired by a stable guard, who had been posted a few moments earlier.⁵²

There are no accounts of Stringfellow's side of the story. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that Stringfellow ignored his instructions or that his men were so undisciplined that they spoke loudly or deserted him. Up to this time, Stringfellow and his men had performed admirably and professionally in scouting, planning, and executing the operation. It is also very unlikely that Cole's headquarters or the entrance to the camp were unguarded. Furthermore, the pickets at the base of Loudoun Heights had to be relieved periodically. This suggests that a relief force, or at least a sergeant-of-the-guard, was operating from the camp or, perhaps, from Cole's headquarters building. Also, Mosby never learned why the shot was fired,

⁴⁹Munson, Reminiscences, p. 242.

⁵⁰Crawford, Mosby and His Men, p. 159.

⁵¹Jones, Ranger Mosby, p. 168.

⁵²Jones, Gray Ghosts, p. 397.

although he must have interrogated the survivors of Stringfellow's group. Therefore, considering the above factors, the individual or individuals responsible for the shot may have been killed or would not admit to firing prematurely.

One possible scenario is that one of Stringfellow's men observed a member of the camp's guard force, near Cole's headquarters. The guard noticed the Confederate, tried to give the alarm, and was shot by Stringfellow's man. Believing that his shot would soon bring a reserve force and that surprise was now impossible, Stringfellow's man fled and stampeded his comrades. Thinking the operation was now a failure, Stringfellow's men raced to warn Mosby's men to withdraw, firing into the camp to cause as much destruction and havoc as possible. As they rode into camp, the man who had shot the Union guard was killed by Mosby's men.

The shot was one element of chance that went against Mosby. As previously mentioned, a commander who is intelligent, determined, and has presence of mind will usually place chance in his favor. This was true for most of this operation. Before the shot was fired, luck had allowed the entire operation to be successful and uneventful. Mosby's plan, however, was too rigid; too much of the operation depended on chance. Mosby's plan depended entirely on surprise. He was so determined to capture the camp that he ignored any other courses of action. When Cole's camp was being surrounded and the first row of tents were as good as captured, Mosby believed that nothing would alter the operation's success. Mosby refused to consider any alternatives. He failed to use his presence of mind to deal with the unexpected. When the operation went awry, Mosby did everything

he could to rally his men and charge the camp. Unfortunately, chance had taken away any opportunity for recovery.

If Mosby had included the possibility of an incident interrupting his plan, he still could have come away with a successful operation. For instance, Mosby could have instructed his men earlier to be prepared for an emergency. At his command, his men could have withdrawn to the camp's perimeter, occupied firing positions and fired volleys into the camp. In this case, the Union would have suffered many casualties and may have eventually surrendered. Mosby's men would have had ample time to fire on the camp because Union reinforcements from Harper's Ferry would have taken almost an hour to arrive.

Also, if Mosby had not been so chivalrous and so determined to capture the entire camp, he could have set up an ambush whereby his men would set fire to the tents and fire on the Union soldiers as they exited. This plan would have destroyed the Union camp, killed numerous Union soldiers, and probably would have ended in the camp's surrender. Nevertheless, Sir Walter Scott's heroes would not have conducted this type of operation and, therefore, neither would Mosby.

Finally, the possibility exists that Mosby's force of 106 men was not large enough to successfully capture Cole's camp of 175 to 200 men. On the other hand, his force was quite adequate for an ambush.

Mosby used a number of significant techniques in this operation:

1. He continued to use his system of prearranged rendezvous points as a means of gathering his men.

2. He utilized men who were not part of his organization, but were intimately familiar with the terrain. Stringfellow's scouts were used to guide Mosby's Rangers from the mansion at Woodgrove to the Union camp site. Mosby also took the opportunity to reconnoiter forward while his men fed their horses.

3. He used concealment. The cold weather, snow, and moonless night helped to cover Mosby's movement to Cole's camp. He recognized, from an earlier operation, that the enemy would not expect the partisans to conduct operations in such weather.

4. Mosby used Stringfellow to gain as much intelligence information about the enemy as possible. Stringfellow's men learned where the Union pickets were and how Cole's camp was organized. Mosby also gained intelligence information by being the first to scale the cliff into Cole's camp and, then, by running around the camp to get a good picture in his mind of what he wanted to do.

5. Stringfellow, not Mosby, initially planned the operation. Once Mosby arrived on the scene, he formulated his own plan, but only had a few moments to organize it. As a result, his plan lacked flexibility.

6. The movement to Loudoun Heights in the severe cold, demonstrated his men's discipline. Although they were miserable, they did not talk and they followed their superior's orders. However, during the attack, many of Mosby's men did not charge the camp as ordered. If they had, more would have died, but they might have been successful in stopping the rally of the Union troops.

7. Mosby planned to conduct the entire operation during the hours of darkness. He knew that darkness was a major factor in the operation's success. Furthermore, he stopped at the mansion in Woodgrove and waited until 9:00 P.M. to resume the march. He did this to reduce the chances of being seen by Union sympathizers.⁵³

8. The column employed two rest stops during the march to counter the effects of cold weather.

9. He used obstacles in his favor. The local Union commander had not considered that a force could approach the camp from the direction that the raiders used

10. Surprise was substituted for deception. The only deception that Mosby employed was his route. It suggested that he was headed somewhere other than Loudoun Heights. Nevertheless, surprise was the major factor and the Union force was caught totally unprepared.

11. Mosby avoided confrontations with the enemy, wanting to capture the enemy without having to fire a shot. This was difficult to accomplish and may have interfered with the overall success of the mission.

12. Mosby did not tell any of his men about the operation. Once they had reached the cliff below Cole's camp, Mosby outlined some of the plan to his subordinate leaders. However, he did not issue his entire plan until they had climbed the cliff and were physically in the camp. If his subordinate leaders had known about the plan earlier, they may have had time to formulate questions. For instance, "What happens if we lose the element of surprise, should we withdraw, charge, or defend in place?"

⁵³Crowford, Mosby and His Men, p. 156.

13. Mosby did not use 100 percent of his men. Of the approximate 180 men in Mosby's battalion, only 106 were available. This was a problem that was peculiar to all partisan units due to travel distances and security problems. If Mosby had had all his men, the mission may have ended differently.

14. The officers of the 43rd Battalion, as was often done in the Civil War, led their men from the front. As a result, they earned the men's devotion, but also suffered greater casualties. Considering his personality, Mosby was probably tempted to personally capture Maj. Cole. However, he wisely situated himself with his men at the critical point of the battlefield.

This section has shown the events leading up to the attack on Loudoun Heights, the situations of both the Union and Confederate armies, Mosby's operations, and the results of those operations. It has also identified the major part that chance played in the outcome of the operation. Finally, Mosby's techniques were outlined to show the parts they played in the overall operation.

The attack on Loudoun Heights was considered by John Esten Cooke as Mosby's only serious failure.⁵⁴ Mosby, however, had lost the service of more men in other operations.⁵⁵ Actually, this operation was more a disappointment than a failure, but no one could ever make Mosby believe that.

⁵⁴Cooke, Wearing of the Gray, p. 123

⁵⁵On 30 May 1863, Mosby had five men killed, twenty wounded, ten captured and had a cannon captured. Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, p. 66.

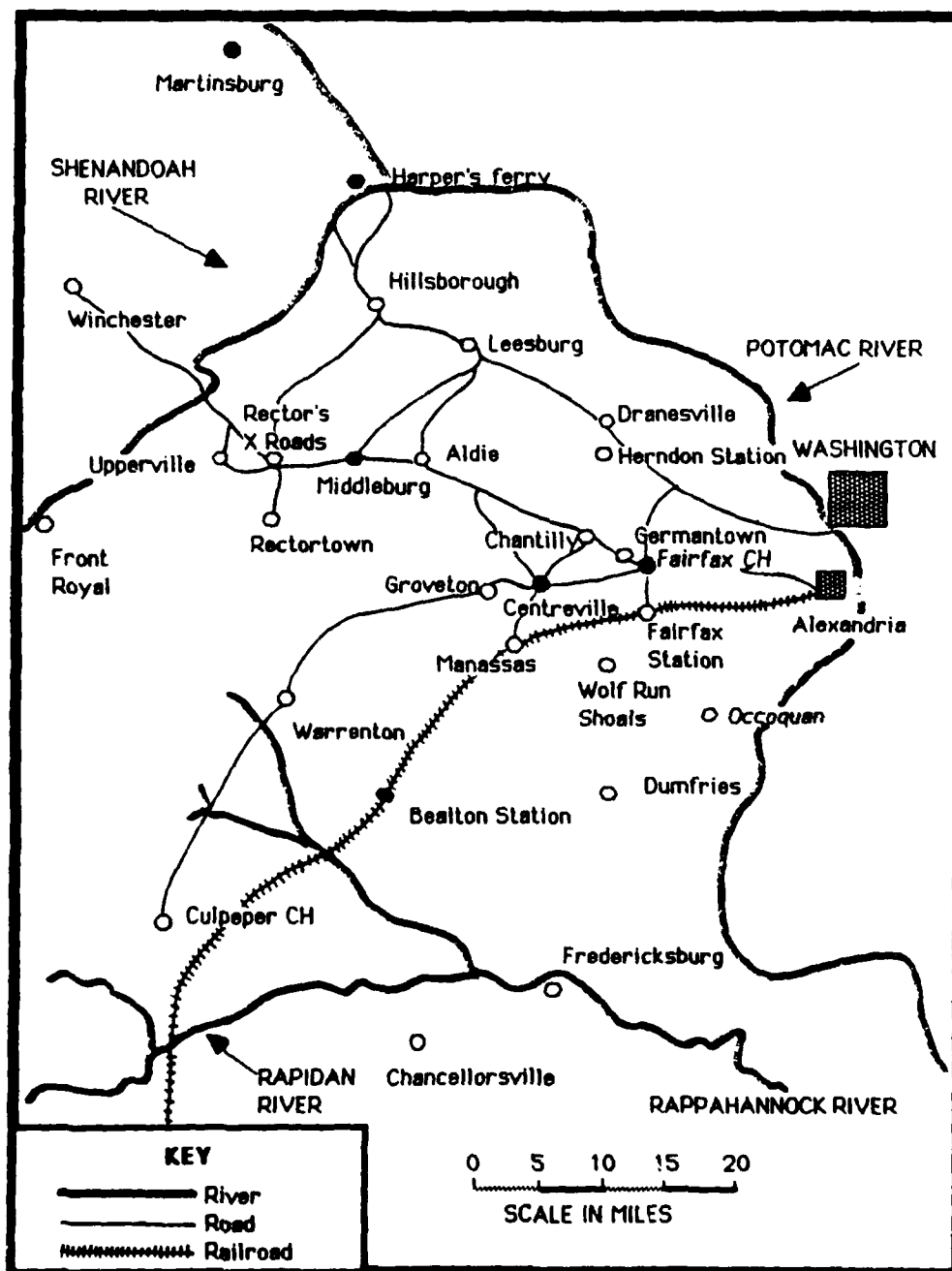


FIGURE 5
NORTHERN VIRGINIA, WINTER 1864

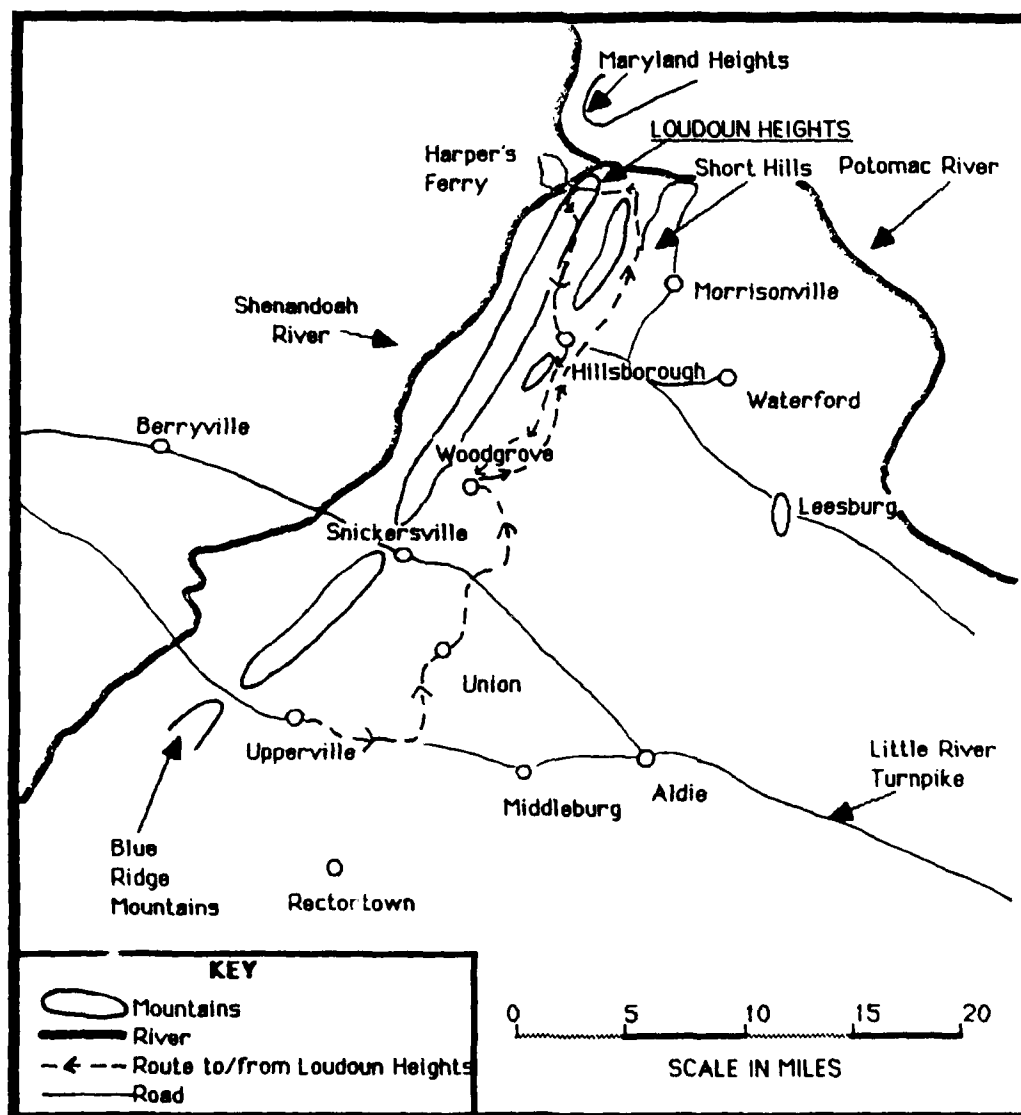


FIGURE 6
HARPER'S FERRY AND VICINITY

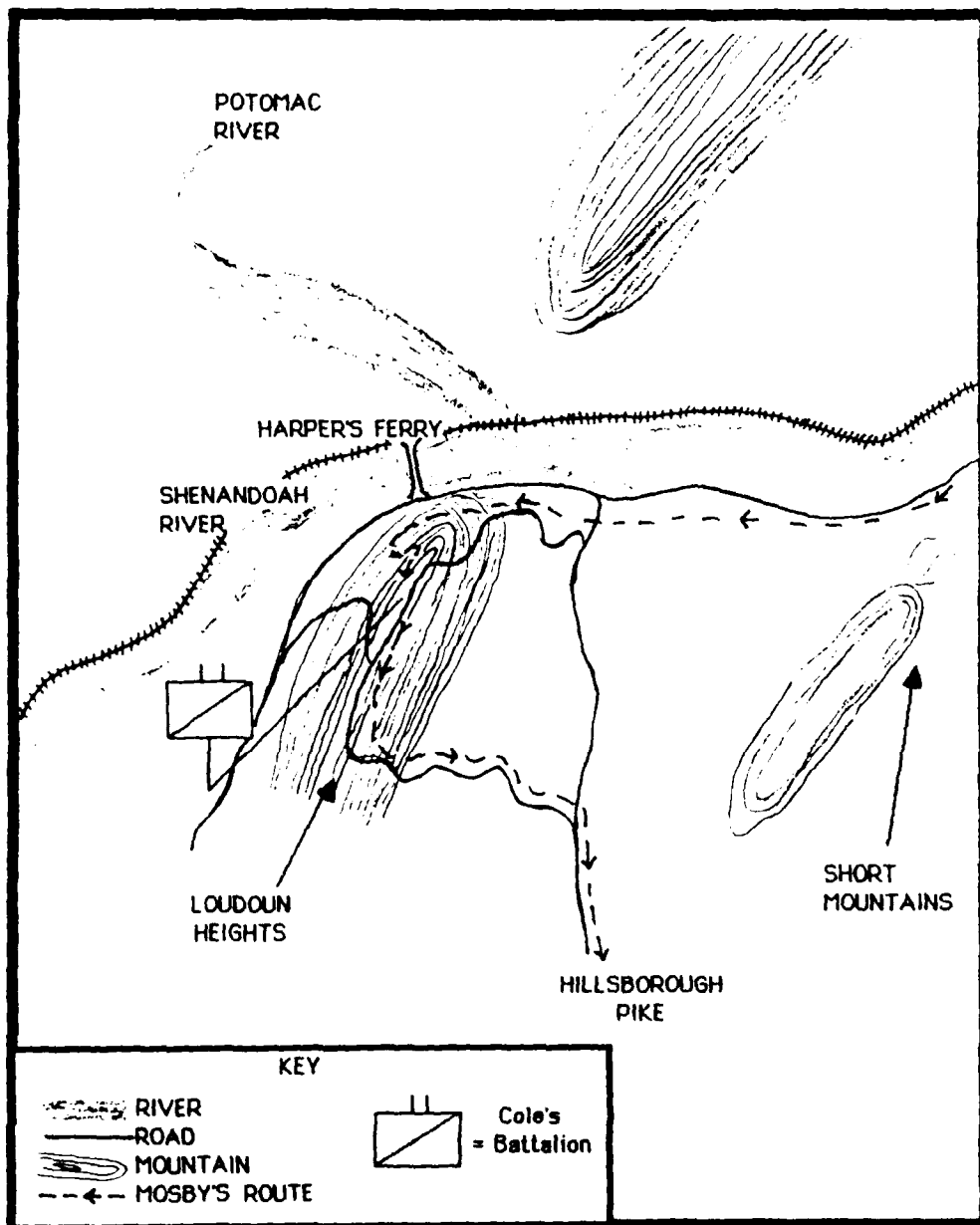


FIGURE 7
ATTACK ON LOUDOUN HEIGHTS

CHAPTER 3

SECTION 3

BERRYVILLE RAID

13 AUGUST 1864

Spring arrived in 1864 with the Union trying to initiate another offensive push toward Richmond, Virginia. However, this particular spring offensive was different from previous years because Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, the Union's new General-in-Chief, designed it as a coordinated attack. His plan called for all his forces to attack from different directions simultaneously. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler would move up the James River from the Atlantic coast; Gen. George G. Meade would move down the Rappahannock; Gen. Franz Sigel would attack up the Shenandoah Valley; Gen. George Crook would push from West Virginia; and as this entire force descended on Richmond, Gen. Ambrose Burnside would guard the Orange and Alexandria Railroad and protect Washington. Grant's idea was to use Meade's Army of the Potomac to hold Lee's army stationary, while Gen. Butler's force attacked his flank and Gen. William T. Sherman's army attacked other Confederate forces in Georgia.¹

The Army of the Potomac crossed the Rappahannock River on 4 May and fought Gen. Lee's army at the battle of the Wilderness near Chancellorsville on 5 and 6 May 1864 (see Figure 8, page 127). The forces then moved five

¹Siepel, Rebel, p. 112.

miles south of the Wilderness to Spotsylvania Court House where, on 8 May, the battle recommenced. During this fight, Grant had sent his cavalry, commanded by Union Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, to cut Lee's lines of communications. Sheridan experienced initial success in Lee's rear area and appeared to have an opportunity to strike Richmond. However, Gen. Stuart's cavalry rushed into defensive positions outside of the Confederate capital and repulsed the Union horsemen. Although the Confederate cavalry was successful in thwarting Sheridan's attack, it paid a heavy price by losing its best cavalryman, JEB Stuart.²

On 18 May, when the battle of Spotsylvania Court House ended, Gen. Grant changed his basic plan of following Lee's army and decided to make Lee follow the Army of the Potomac. On 26 May 1864, Grant directed Meade's army to outflank Lee and slice through the Confederate defense system that had stymied Gen. Butler's force. The Confederates, however, anticipated Grant's southeastward move by reinforcing their defenses in Grant's path. This maneuver stopped the Union advance at Cold Harbor, Virginia and required Grant's army to make frontal assaults into Lee's defenses. On 1 June, the Union began hammering at the Confederate lines and did not stop until 3 June when it lost five thousand men in the final ten minutes.³

The thirty days of continual fighting cost the Union over fifty thousand soldiers while the Confederates lost slightly less than half that number. Although Grant's army had been defeated at Cold Harbor, it had not been

²Thomason, JEB Stuart, pp. 500-501.

³Pratt, Civil War, pp. 286-301.

destroyed. It still had the ability to maneuver while the Confederate force, tied to its defensive belt, could not.⁴

Less than two weeks later, Gen. Grant resumed his southward move in an effort to outmaneuver Lee's army and sever Richmond's supply lines. His forces attacked toward the railcenter of Petersburg, south of Richmond. Grant's Army was met en route by a small Confederate force under Gen. Pierre G. T. Beauregard and was delayed long enough for Lee to occupy opposing defensive positions. On 15 June 1864, Grant launched a four-day series of attacks against Lee and suffered ten thousand casualties. In spite of these heavy losses, Grant maintained his position and began a siege of Petersburg that would last the next ten months. Although he did not defeat Lee, Grant did perform one important service, he took away Lee's ability to attack the North.

Meanwhile, the Union force in the Shenandoah Valley was also having problems. On 4 May 1864, when Grant began his offensive against Lee, Gen. Sigel also started his push up the Shenandoah Valley with eleven thousand Federal troops (see Figure 9, page 128). Opposing him was the commander of the Confederate force, Gen. J. D. Imboden, with 1,592 soldiers. Imboden realized that he was heavily outnumbered, but Lee could not release any reinforcements because Grant was pressing too hard.⁵ Therefore, Imboden had to find ways of neutralizing Sigel's manpower advantage.

As Sigel's force crossed the Potomac and advanced southward up the Valley, two partisan ranger units moved into his rear. One of these was a small unit of sixty men led by Capt. Jesse McNeill, and the other was a

⁴Ibid.

⁵Jones, Gray Ghosts, p. 232.

portion of Mosby's battalion. Mosby had divided his command so he could simultaneously harrass Sigel's and Grant's lines of communications. By 14 May, Gen. Sigel had retreated northward down the Shenandoah Valley, leaving equipment and burning bridges behind him. He had been defeated by Imboden's smaller Confederate force because he had not been able to take advantage of his greater size. Sigel could only employ six of his twelve regiments against Imboden because the remaining six regiments were trying to protect his rear against partisans.⁶

The Union, on 21 May 1864, replaced Sigel with Gen. David Hunter, who, after beginning a new offensive on 26 May, was also driven back by the Confederates.⁷ This time, however, the Confederate force was a corps commanded by Gen. Jubal Early. By 4 July, Gen. Hunter had completely withdrawn from the Valley and had provided Early with the opportunity to cross the Potomac into Maryland. Early took advantage of this opportunity and raised havoc throughout Maryland. Meanwhile, Mosby also crossed the Potomac and helped Early protect his right flank by cutting all the communications between Harper's Ferry and Washington.

Gen. Early attacked all the way to the outskirts of Washington, but he depleted much of his strength by doing so. Consequently, on 14 July, he returned to Virginia after the Washington defenses had repulsed his attack.⁸

By the beginning of August 1864, Gen. Grant and President Lincoln had lost patience with the Shenandoah Valley campaign. As a result, Grant

⁶Ibid, pp. 240-241.

⁷The Shenandoah Campaigns of 1862 and 1864 and the Appomattox Campaign 1865, (Boston: The Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, 1907), pp. 68-82.

⁸Jones, Gray Ghosts, pp. 256-265.

requested and received Gen. Philip Sheridan as the new commander of the forces in the Valley. Grant's message said, "I want Sheridan put in command of all the troops in the field, with instructions to put himself south of the enemy, and follow him to the death. Wherever the enemy goes, let our troops go also."⁹

President Lincoln approved of Grant's dispatch and added, "This, I think, is exactly right as to how our troops should move; but. . . . I repeat to you [Grant], it will neither be done nor attempted, unless you watch over it every day and hour and force it."¹⁰

On 7 August, Gen. Sheridan took command of the Union's Middle Military Division and assumed responsibility for West Virginia, the Shenandoah Valley, and Washington.¹¹ Grant informed Sheridan that, due to the upcoming presidential election, victory in the Shenandoah Valley was not only a military necessity, but also a political one. He added that Sheridan was expected to "Take all provisions, forage, and stock wanted for the use of your command. . . [What] cannot be consumed, destroy."¹² When Sheridan began his campaign, he commanded 45,487 men divided among four major combat units: VI Corps commanded by Gen. Horatio G. Wright; VIII Corps commanded by Gen. George Crook; XIX Corps commanded by Gen. W. H. Emory; and the Cavalry Corps commanded by Gen. A. T. A. Torbert.¹³

⁹Richard O'Connor, Sheridan the Inevitable, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1953), p. 191.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹OR, vol. XLIII, pt. I, p. 719.

¹²O'Connor, Sheridan, p. 192.

¹³OR, vol. XLIII, pt. I, p. 974.

By 10 August, the Union force had pushed forty-five miles southward and forced Gen. Early, with 12,150 men, into defensive positions between Strasburg and Cedar Creek, Virginia.¹⁴ Sheridan had believed that Early would make his stand near the town of Winchester, but Early was not satisfied with the terrain in that area. As a result, Early withdrew to the Strasburg-Cedar Creek area, and Sheridan's army moved farther and faster than the Union had expected. Although he had started with ten days of supply,¹⁵ Sheridan knew that (1) attacking Early's defensive positions would deplete his supplies faster than planned; (2) his army would have difficulty in supplying itself from Harper's Ferry; and (3) if Early withdrew farther, the Union force may not have enough supplies to pursue him. Therefore, on 12 August 1864, Gen. Sheridan ordered Brig. Gen. John R. Kenly's infantry brigade to escort his army's supply train from Harper's Ferry to Winchester and arrive by that evening. Kenly received the order at 9:40 A.M., understood the urgency of Sheridan's request, and immediately began organizing the operation. He later commented:

... [I understood] the pressing nature of General Sheridan's order; ... I believed the army would be out of supplies that night; ... I was determined to get the [wagon] train into Winchester by daylight [the] next morning, so as to be ready to issue supplies [the] next day, and ... spare no exertion to get the train forward as promptly as possible.¹⁶

Sheridan's order provided Kenly with information on how many units were involved, how the train would be organized, and what route he should take. The order directed that Kenly form the train in the following order:

¹⁴O'Connor, Sheridan, p. 195.

¹⁵OR, vol. XLIII, pt. I, p. 792.

¹⁶Ibid, p. 625.

first, the train of the VI Corps; second, the train of the XIX Corps, third; that of the VIII Corps; and fourth, the Cavalry Corps train. The order did not include instructions concerning the location of his own brigade's train, so Kenly assumed it should be the last in line.¹⁷

Kenly's escort force was supposed to consist of his own brigade of three infantry regiments--3d Maryland, 144th and 149th Ohio National Guard--and a battery of artillery.¹⁸ Therefore, he ordered his staff to organize the escort force in this manner: Two companies of the 3d Maryland would precede the leading wagons and the remainder of the regiment would be distributed in the train at a ratio of one company per every twenty wagons, counting from the head of the train. The companies of the 149th Ohio would be distributed at a ratio of twenty or thirty wagons per company, counting from the last company of the 3d Maryland. The commander of the 144th Ohio would provide and command two companies as a rear guard behind the last wagon. The remainder of his companies would be distributed at a ratio of one company per every twenty wagons counting from the rear of the train. Finally, when the artillery arrived, they would be divided into three sections and placed in the lead, center, and rear portions of the train.¹⁹

Unfortunately for Brig. Gen. Kenly, Sheridan's orders did not state how many wagons would have to be escorted. Kenly remarked that at the time he issued the orders, he was totally ignorant of the number of wagons constituting the train. Although, he had seen numerous wagons at Harper's

¹⁷ibid, p. 623.

¹⁸These two units of the Ohio National Guard were only mustered into service for a period of 100 days. They should not be confused with present day National Guard units.

¹⁹ibid.

Ferry the previous day, so he did have some idea about the size of the train.²⁰

The starting point for the road march was two miles southwest of Harper's Ferry at Halltown, and between eleven and twelve o'clock, the first few wagons began to arrive (see Figure 10, page 129). Unfortunately, these were the wrong wagons. By 1:30 P.M., the real wagon train began arriving from Harper's Ferry. Kenly had previously coordinated for his brigade to assume their escort positions while the train was moving and, when the lead portion of the train reached Halltown, they integrated as planned. As time passed, Kenly began noticing large gaps between the serials of wagons as they arrived from Harper's Ferry. Therefore, between three and four o'clock, he ordered the train to halt short of Charlestown, and not to resume until he personally gave the order. He was still unaware of how many wagons were expected or who was in charge of the train's movement, but he did learn that the artillery battery was not with the wagon train and could not be found.

When he finally met the quartermaster in charge of the train, Brig. Gen. Kenly learned that the section for the Cavalry Corps had been causing the delays, that everything was now in order, and that even the quartermaster officer did not know how many wagons were in the train—he guessed there were six hundred.

Kenly gave the order to move and by 4:20 P.M. the train was advancing through Charlestown. Although the exact number of wagons was not known, one officer reported that it initially took two and one half hours for the lead

²⁰Ibid.

and rear wagons to pass the same point. During the march, Kenly halted the train twice in order to permit the men to freshen up and to enable the train to close up. Later, when the train arrived at a stream on the northern edge of Berryville, Kenly ordered another halt so that the mules and horses could be watered. Then the quartermaster officer took control of the parking and watering while Kenly posted pickets around the train and sent advanced guards and vedettes into Berryville.

The train resumed its march at 11:30 P.M. by entering Berryville and turning right toward Winchester. Two miles later, the column entered a short wooded trail in order to detour around a tree that had blocked the road. This caused the column to move very slowly because the trail was hard to define in the dark woods. The train reentered the road, but a short time later, it encountered an old bridge that was considered too dangerous to cross. Kenly's men located a fording site and, once again, the train detoured from the main route. After approximately sixty wagons had passed, one of the wagons broke down at the ford. The entire train was forced to wait until the wagon could be repaired because there was no other bypasses available. After negotiating various other minor obstacles, the wagon train reached the Opequon Creek a few moments before daylight on 13 August. Kenly had assumed that the trail elements of the column had probably departed Berryville by three o'clock in the morning.²¹

After crossing Opequon Creek, Kenly led the train the final five miles into Winchester. When he arrived at his destination, he was unable to find anyone who could tell him what to do next. Therefore, he ordered a halt and

²¹ Ibid, pp. 623-626.

parked the wagons outside of Winchester. Kenly watched much of the wagon train roll into the park over the next one and one-half to two hours, until his aide approached him. His aide informed Kenly that the train was moving smoothly west of Berryville, but that the quartermaster was having serious problems organizing the rear of the train. He explained that the officer responsible for the conduct of the cavalry train had remained in Harper's Ferry; that no one had taken charge of it during the march; that the teamsters of the cavalry train had unhitched the wagons at Berryville; and that the quartermaster and the commander of the rear guard were trying to get the train hitched and moving. Furthermore, while the train was stopped at Berryville, another wagon train, also belonging to the cavalry, arrived from Harper's Ferry without escort and joined the rear of Kenly's train.

After hearing his aide explain the train's problems, Brig. Gen. Kenly rode into Winchester, found Sheridan's representative, and transferred the responsibility for the train. When Kenly finished, someone approached him and reported that the rear of the train had been attacked. Kenly asked a few questions, mounted his horse, and rode toward Berryville to investigate. About halfway between Winchester and Berryville, Kenly met his quartermaster. The quartermaster reported that while the rear of the train was hitching up, a Confederate force had attacked, captured some wagons, were subsequently driven off, and the train was now advancing toward Winchester.

Upon hearing the quartermaster's report, Brig. Gen. Kenly placed the 3d Maryland into defensive positions along the Opequon Creek and sent

instructions for the remainder of his brigade to be prepared to rescue the train or react to other future situations.²²

That evening at ten o'clock, Gen. Sheridan reported the results of the wagon train attack to Gen. Grant at the end of a lengthy message:

... I have a large number of 100 days' men whose terms of service expire in a few days. Can they be made to serve for a longer period or shall I allow them to be mustered out? Mosby attacked the rear of my train this morning en route here from Harper's Ferry, and burned six wagons.²³

In the above message, Gen. Sheridan's comment about the 100 day's men referred to the various National Guard units employed by the Union. They were states' militia who were mustered into Federal service for one hundred days; and because of their short period of Federal service, they were often used for guard and escort duties. Two of these units that Sheridan referred to were escorting his wagon train, the 149th Ohio, whose one hundred days ended on 16 August; and the 144th Ohio, whose obligation ended on 19 August.²⁴

The last part of Sheridan's message called attention to the raid on his supply train near Berryville. The fact that Mosby was mentioned in Sheridan's report is significant. When a commander of four corps, three federal departments, and over 45,000 soldiers, reports a minor detail about Mosby only destroying six wagons, then he is also reporting that he has considerable respect for or fear of Mosby. Nevertheless, considering

²²Ibid, pp. 626-627.

²³Ibid, p. 783.

²⁴Whitelaw Reid, Ohio in the War, (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach and Baldwin, 1868), vol. II, pp. 674, 680.

Mosby's actions over the last five days, it is surprising that Sheridan did not say more.

For example, on the morning of 8 August 1864, Mosby and a small party of rangers crossed the Shenandoah River, "went for a scout" in Sheridan's rear area, and returned with a Union lieutenant and six soldiers as prisoners. They also returned with enough valuable information to warrant a return to the same area that night. That information provided Mosby with the exact disposition of Sheridan's headquarters and, therefore, he decided to "pay the general a visit" in the same manner that he had "visited" Brig. Gen Stoughton.²⁵

That night, Mosby and a few men worked their way into Sheridan's camp by saying they were part of a New York regiment. When they were within three hundred yards of the house Sheridan was using as his headquarters, Mosby went forward to reconnoiter. He saw a rail fence around the house but could not identify any more details in the dark. He selected one of his best scouts, John Hearn, to slip inside the fence and ascertain the size of the force guarding the general. Hearn moved stealthily to the fence and easily jumped it. When he landed, he was only inches from six sleeping soldiers. He looked up and saw a sentinel advancing toward him, demanding the intruder's name. The raider said something about searching for his New York regiment and then jumped the sentinel. He wrenched the guard's musket away, but could not restrain him from screaming, "Murder, murder." The sentinel's screams forced Hearn to withdraw and Mosby to give up the idea of capturing Sheridan.²⁶

²⁵Scott, Partisan Life, pp. 271-272.

²⁶Ibid.

This raid was Mosby's first disappointment since January when his battalion had attacked Loudoun Heights. Between February and August 1864, the 43d Battalion, Virginia Cavalry had been responsible for sixty-eight Union soldiers killed, over one hundred Union wounded, more than 573 Federal troops captured, and at least 632 horses and mules captured. During the same period, the partisan rangers had approximately eight of their own men killed, seventeen wounded, and thirty-eight captured.²⁷

The significant events pertaining to Mosby's unit from February to August 1864 include: (1) On 17 February, the same day that Mosby was promoted to Lt. Col., a number of the partisan rangers were captured as a result of treachery by a southern businessman.²⁸ (2) On 21 April, Confederate Secretary of War Seddon announced that only Mosby's and McNeill's partisan commands could retain their legitimate ranger status. (3) On 1 April, Mosby formed Company D. On the same day, he declared war on liquor production, saying that distilleries contributed to the scarcity of grain and that liquor consumption demoralized the fighting man.²⁹ (4) On 28 July, Mosby organized Company E.³⁰

On 12 August 1864, after his aborted capture attempt, Mosby started searching for another way of attracting Gen. Sheridan's attention. He did not know that his abduction attempt had already been noticed by the Union

²⁷Williamson, *Mosby's Rangers*, pp. 133-207.

²⁸*Ibid*, pp. 135-137. Union forces were guided by a man named John Cornwall in retaliation for a payment dispute involving some of Mosby's men. Cornwall had appealed to Mosby for satisfaction, but was overruled. Also, the Union had reported capturing twenty-eight of Mosby's men, but an unknown number of prisoners were actually civilians.

²⁹Siepel, *Rebel*, pp. 110-111.

³⁰Williamson, *Mosby's Rangers*, p. 197.

General. Sheridan had demonstrated the magnitude of his concern for Mosby by sending a message on 12 August ordering the 8th Illinois Cavalry Regiment to, "... exterminate as many of Mosby's gang as they can."³¹

On the same day that Sheridan sent his "extermination" message, Mosby called an afternoon meeting of his battalion at Rectorstown. He had learned from one of his scouts that long supply trains were passing down the Shenandoah Valley between Harper's Ferry and Gen. Sheridan's army. After 250 to 300 men had answered his call, Mosby told them that they were going to "deliver a blow at Sheridan's rear and thus cripple him by cutting off his supplies."³²

The Confederate force departed Rectorstown that afternoon, passed through the Blue Ridge Mountains at Snicker's Gap, crossed the Shenandoah at Castleman's Ferry and, by midnight, had established a camp near Berryville. While they were bedding down for the night, Mosby's scout arrived and reported a very large train nearby. Mosby selected a few men and departed for a closer look at the wagon train while the remainder of the rangers slept.

As the small group advanced, they could hear the sounds of the train many miles before they could see it. Mosby and his men found the train, rode up to the wagons, and individually mingled with the drivers and horsemen. They asked questions about the train's destination, its composition, and when it would halt. A short while later, Mosby withdrew his men from the train and, after finding out what his men had learned, sent one back to the camp with instructions to bring the entire battalion forward. Mosby and the

³¹OR, vol. XLIII, pt. I, p. 776.

³²Mosby, Memoirs, p. 290.

others remained and began studying the terrain to determine their best course of action for the attack

Mosby had already learned from the personnel in the supply train that they were planning a rest halt near the edge of Berryville. Therefore, he planned his attack to coincide with this halt. He would initiate the attack with the two mountain howitzers that Stuart had given him earlier in the year and follow up with a cavalry assault. He selected a small knoll on the east side of the Berryville-Charlestown road as his artillery position. The howitzers would create fear and confusion in the enemy and provide an advantage for his mounted rangers. Mosby planned to divide his unit into four elements: two attacking squadrons, an artillery section of two cannon, and a reserve. One squadron, led by Capt. A. E. Richards and composed of Companies A and B, would attack the lead elements of the train. The other squadron, a combined force of Companies C and D commanded by Capt. William Chapman, would attack the train's rear. The new Company E would stay with the artillery, near the center of the train, and function as the reserve.³³

At sunrise on 13 August, Mosby could see the train and its large herd of cattle from his position on the knoll. He was only one hundred yards from the guarded column of wagons, but the morning mist helped to obscure his presence. As the sun rose higher, so did Mosby's anxiety. He saw that the mist was rapidly disappearing and that many of the teams were being hitched to the wagons. Mosby knew he would lose his second opportunity to

³³Ibid, pp. 290-291.

attract Sheridan's attention if his men did not arrive soon. He dispatched a courier to locate his battalion and hurry their arrival.

The battalion arrived a few minutes later and Mosby issued his instructions to his men, telling them to hurry into position. Mosby remained on the knoll and watched his men dismount the howitzer parts from the pack mules. He looked back at the wagon train and noticed that one element of it was moving. Then his men discovered that one of the mountain howitzers had a broken carriage and was incapable of firing. Mosby impatiently urged his men to hurry with the second howitzer. They finished its assembly and were rolling it into position when:

... a swarm of angry yellow jackets, living up to their reputation as home rulers, poured out of a hole in the ground and began a stinging protest against invasion of their territory. The hardened artillerymen who could face shell fire without a quiver fled in all directions.³⁴

Mosby realized that his opportunity to destroy the wagon train was rapidly departing. First, portions of the wagon train were already moving away from his attack position. Second, some of his attack force, within seventy-five yards of the wagon train, were visible to the Union escorts³⁵. Therefore, it was only a matter of minutes before his men would be recognized as enemy. Third, Mosby's men had previously agreed that the signal to attack would be three rounds fired from the cannon. And finally, by the time Mosby could notify his men of the change in plans, he would have lost the opportunity to attack.

³⁴Jones, Ranger Mosby, p. 197.

³⁵A. E. Richards, "Mosby's Partizan Rangers," in Adventures and Escapes in the Civil War, (New York: The Century Company, 1904), p. 110.

Fortunately for Mosby, his artillery first sergeant ran into the swarm, grabbed a chain on the gun, and dragged it down the hill. Within a few moments, the crew rejoined the cannon and had it ready to fire. The first artillery round landed short, making the soldiers of Brig. Gen. Kenly's brigade believe they were witnessing some friendly target practice.³⁶ Their thoughts quickly changed when the second round beheaded a mule:

The whole wagon train was thrown into panic. Teamsters wheeled their horses and mules into the road and, plying their black-snake whips, sent the animals galloping madly down the pike, crashing into other teams which, in turn, ran away. Infantry stampeded in every direction.³⁷

When the third round hit the wagon train, the two squadrons of rangers attacked the front and rear flanks of the train, "... the whole Command charging from the slope, not in columns but spread out all over creation, each man doing his best to outyell his comrade and emptying revolvers, ... left and right."³⁸ As Chapman's squadron hit the train's rear, the Ohio National Guardsmen took refuge behind a stone wall and poured volleys of musket fire into the rangers. However, they quickly retreated into the woods when the Confederates charged their positions. The raiders then returned to the wagon train and charged toward its front, riding over or shooting at any remaining infantrymen.

Meanwhile, Richards' squadron had attacked the lead elements of the train's escort forces and chased them into Berryville's church. The infantry engaged the Confederates with a withering volume of fire from the church's

³⁶Ibid, p. 111.

³⁷Munson, Reminiscences, p. 105.

³⁸Ibid.

windows, forcing the raiders to withdraw toward the wagon train. Capt. Richards rallied the Confederates, charged the church, and dislodged the Union defenders while suffering one ranger killed and two others wounded.

The conflict stretched over one and one-half miles and when the Union resistance had finally subsided, Mosby gave orders to unhitch and collect all the wagon teams that had not run away, and set fire to the wagons. Mosby told his men to gather what they could take with them and begin the twenty-five mile march back to Rectortown. When they departed, they carried off more than two hundred prisoners, between five and six hundred horses and mules, two hundred beef cattle and numerous other valuable items.³⁹ Additionally, they had destroyed seventy-five wagons and five days of rations and supplies for 2,200 Union cavalrymen.⁴⁰

The raid on the wagon train at Berryville ended at approximately eight o'clock in the morning and by four o'clock that afternoon, the spoils of this operation were safely in Rectortown. In the operation, Mosby lost two men killed and three wounded, while the Union lost seven killed and seven wounded.⁴¹

Mosby's raid caused more damage than that described above. When the 1st Rhode Island Cavalry arrived at Berryville thirty minutes after the raiders had departed, they realized that they had lost all their clothing, their regimental books and papers, and their regimental flag.⁴² In addition

³⁹OR, vol. XLIII, pt. I, p. 1000.

⁴⁰Ibid, p. 621; Siepel, Rebel, p. 118.

⁴¹Mosby, Memoirs, p. 291; Reid, Ohio in the War, pp. 674, 680; Rev Frederic Denison, Sabres and Spurs, (The first Rhode Island cavalry Veteran Association, 1876), p. 376.

⁴²Denison, Sabres and Spurs, p.376.

to the Rhode Island cavalry's losses, the 1st U. S. Cavalry would also experience inconveniences for a long time. Besides losing its clothing and supplies, the regiment also lost all of the records, invoices, and receipts that would permit it to function logistically.⁴³

The Union's luck during the operation was not all bad. For instance, Mosby's men had overlooked a heavy metal chest in one of the wagons they had burned. As soon as Mosby's raiders departed the wagon train, the owner of the box returned, put it on a horse and rode off under escort. Mosby had missed capturing a \$112,000 payroll intended for Sheridan's army.⁴⁴

The most significant result of Mosby's raid was its impact on Sheridan's operations. It was a major factor in causing Gen. Sheridan's army to withdraw on 15 August to Halltown where he had started his offensive a week earlier. The day after Mosby's raid, Sheridan reported to the Chief of Staff, Gen. Halleck, "This line cannot be held, nor can I supply my command beyond that point with the ten day's rations with which I started."⁴⁵

Furthermore, Sheridan had not corrected his report of six wagons burned by Mosby. That changed, however, when Gen. Halleck sent him a wire on 19 August asking, "... [a scout] says that Mosby told him that he had captured one of your trains of seventy or eighty wagons, with 500 mules and horses. Is that true?"⁴⁶ Sheridan replied that he had initially been given bad information about the raid, but only two hundred mules and forty wagons were captured.

⁴³OR, vol. XLIII, pt. I, p. 621.

⁴⁴Ibid, p. 485.

⁴⁵Ibid, p. 792.

⁴⁶Ibid, p. 841.

By 16 August, Mosby had gotten the attention of both Grant and Sheridan. That was the day Grant received Sheridan's message about Mosby's burning six wagons. Grant sent two messages to Sheridan in reply. The first read

The families of most of Mosby's men are known, and can be collected. I think they should be taken and kept at Fort McHenry, or some secure place, as hostages for the good conduct of Mosby and his men. Where any of Mosby's men are caught hang them without trial.⁴⁷

Evidently Mosby played heavily on Grant's mind because he sent a second message to Sheridan two hours later:

If you can possibly spare a division of cavalry, send them through Loudoun County, to destroy and carry off the crops, animals, negroes, and all men under fifty years of age capable of bearing arms. In this way you will get many of Mosby's men. All male citizens under fifty can fairly be held as prisoners of war, and not as citizen prisoners. If not already soldiers, they will be made so the moment the rebel army gets hold of them.⁴⁸

The next day, 17 August, Sheridan received Grant's first message and sent this reply, "Mosby has annoyed me and captured a few wagons. We hung one and shot six of his men yesterday."⁴⁹ The message reported that Sheridan had executed Mosby's men on 16 August, but he had not yet received Grant's message authorizing him to do so (received 6:30 A.M., 17 August). Mosby, after the Civil War, conducted extensive research into Sheridan's message. He concluded that Sheridan never had anyone hung on 16 August, and for certain, none of the men Sheridan reported as executing were

⁴⁷Ibid, p. 811.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid, p. 822.

Mosby's.⁵⁰ It appears that Sheridan was only trying to appease his superior by telling him what he wanted to hear and avoiding what he did not want to hear. This explains why Sheridan only reported six wagons burned and why he did not elaborate on the reasons for his withdrawal in the Shenandoah Valley.

Furthermore, one hour after Sheridan was forced to admit to Gen. Halleck that Mosby had inflicted considerable damage, he sent Gen. Grant the following message of assurance, "Guerrillas give me great annoyance, but I am quietly disposing of numbers of them. The enemy appears to be uncertain as to what course to pursue."⁵¹ Once again, Mosby said he did not lose any men to the Union general. Sheridan probably said these things in order to appease Grant and avoid his temper. Regardless of the reasons for Sheridan's and Grant's messages, the facts show that Mosby certainly attracted their attention with this operation.

Mosby's raid also cost Sheridan's army the service of combat soldiers at the front lines. In addition to ordering the 8th Illinois Cavalry to "break up and exterminate any bands of Mosby's," Sheridan also spread many of his cavalry units throughout the area to guard against raiding parties.⁵²

The Berryville raid also helped Gen. Sheridan decide to organize two ranger forces of his own, one was from the 2d Rhode Island Infantry and the other was a specialized independent unit of one hundred men.⁵³ These were counter guerrilla forces designed to set counterambushes and countertraps,

⁵⁰Southern Historical Society Papers, ed. R. A. Brock (Richmond: Southern Historical Society, 1899), vol. XXVII, pp. 267-275.

⁵¹*Ibid*, p. 841.

⁵²QR, vol. XLIII, pt. I, p. 831.

⁵³QR, vol. XLIII, pt. I, p. 860.

and depending on the situation, were permitted to wear Confederate and Union uniforms. Unfortunately, they also had the tendency to loot, were nicknamed "Sheridan's Robbers" by their own army, and proved ineffective against Mosby.⁵⁴

The element of chance also had a significant impact on Mosby's raid. First, if the cavalry train had been properly supervised, it probably would not have unhitched its horses, and therefore, it would not have been as vulnerable to attack. Second, Mosby was fortunate that his cannon could fire the three rounds necessary to signal the start of the attack. Of the two cannons that Mosby had, one never fired and the second cannon malfunctioned soon after it fired the third "signal" round. Third, the Union escort was composed of "100 days men." Prior to this raid, Mosby had always been reluctant to attack infantry units because they could defend quickly and strongly. The presence of cannon, however, provided him with a combat multiplier that would tend to negate the infantry's defensive advantage. Therefore, Mosby believed that a day attack against infantry might be successful. The fact that the escorts were from the Ohio National Guard was also a major advantage for Mosby. The militia knew they would be released from Federal service and be home with their families within the week. Therefore, when the Ohio soldiers saw Mosby's rangers attack the train, they were more concerned with staying alive and getting back to Ohio than protecting the train. Finally, when the two ranger squadrons were waiting for the attack signal, Mosby was lucky that the Federal troops did not recognize his men as enemy and take away his element of surprise

⁵⁴O'Connor, Sheridan, p. 194.

Chance was in Mosby's favor and not in the Union's favor. The wagon train was a hasty operation of many large units. Brig. Gen. Kenly had insufficient time and information to conduct proper planning and the units in the supply train were disorganized and undisciplined. As a result, they provided the elements of chance and friction with numerous opportunities to interfere with the operation. Actually, considering the outcome of the raid, the Union was fortunate not to have suffered greater losses.

On the other hand, Mosby had a close-knit and relatively efficient unit and had sufficient time to prepare his plan and execute it. Therefore, chance and friction had less opportunity to interfere with the operation. Mosby's operational techniques were, for the most part, largely responsible for the success of this raid. The following is a list of the techniques he used:

1. Mosby used his system of rendezvous points as a successful means of gathering his men for meetings or operations.

2. Mosby knew and used the terrain to his advantage. He personally selected the artillery firing positions and the squadrons' attack positions. He also used the night's darkness in masking his movement to a forward assembly area and used the hazy weather in obscuring his attack position.

3. He gained and used as much intelligence information about the enemy as he could find. For example, Mosby used his scout to determine the location of the train, that it was only guarded by infantry, and that the nearest cavalry unit was over two and one-half miles away.⁵⁵ Furthermore,

⁵⁵Crawford, Mosby and His Men, p. 239.

Mosby personally gathered intelligence about the enemy by riding with the train and asking important questions about routes, security, and rest halts.

4. Mosby planned the operation from start to finish, saw the terrain where the raid would take place, and supervised the raid's execution. At this point, this was the largest unit Mosby had employed. His planning allowed for and made good use of his unit's size. Mosby's raid was a coordinated attack with two maneuver elements, separated by more than a mile; a fire support element; and a reserve. In order to control this force, Mosby chose to use his cannon as the trigger for the attack. This was reasonable considering that he had two cannon. During the execution of the operation, one cannon could not be fired and the other had a temporary problem with some "inhospitable" hornets. Therefore, one could speculate that Mosby had wished he had had a backup signal.

5. The raid demonstrated that the rangers were sufficiently disciplined to follow instructions, technically proficient in scouting, and capable of conducting a coordinated attack.

6. Mosby used his most experienced units in the attack and "saved" his most inexperienced company, Company E, as the reserve.

7. Mosby informed his men of the purpose for the mission and explained his plan. His men knew what was expected of them, and as a result, the operation went smoothly.

8. The raid employed the use of deception, surprise, and audacity. First, Mosby deceived the members of the wagon train when he and his men rode along with it the night before the raid. Second, he had to retain the element of surprise because the enemy had at least a regiment of infantry versus his

unit of 250 to 300 cavalrymen. Finally, the entire operation was audacious considering Mosby's night ride with the wagon train; the close proximity of the attack positions to the Union forces; and the slow, twenty-five mile march home with one thousand prisoners and animals. Furthermore, the Union infantry had seen Mosby's cannon and squadrons of rangers nearby, but, because they were so close, the Federals never imagined that they could be enemy.⁵⁶

9. Mosby and his subordinate leaders led by example from the front of their respective units and, as a result, limited the amount of confusion in the operation.

10. Mosby understood the importance of his raid to the Confederate cause and notified Gen. Lee by telegraph of its outcome.⁵⁷ This was one of the very rare instances that Mosby used the telegraph, but he wanted to make sure that Lee knew that Sheridan had suffered a major blow to his logistics.

In summary, this section outlined the third and final operation of this study. It showed how the Berryville raid impacted on the Union army's leaders and soldiers, and how Mosby planned and executed a daylight, coordinated attack. Finally, it outlined the techniques that Mosby used to make the operation a success.

The Berryville raid was Mosby's largest operation as of August 1864 and one of the most important operations of his career. It was a major reason why modern historians such as Bruce Catton and Virgil C. Jones

⁵⁶Richards, "Mosby's Partizan Rangers," p. 111.

⁵⁷OR, vol. XLIII, pt. I, p. 1000.

credited Mosby and other partisans with prolonging the Civil War for eight or nine months.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Jones, Gray Ghosts, p. vii.

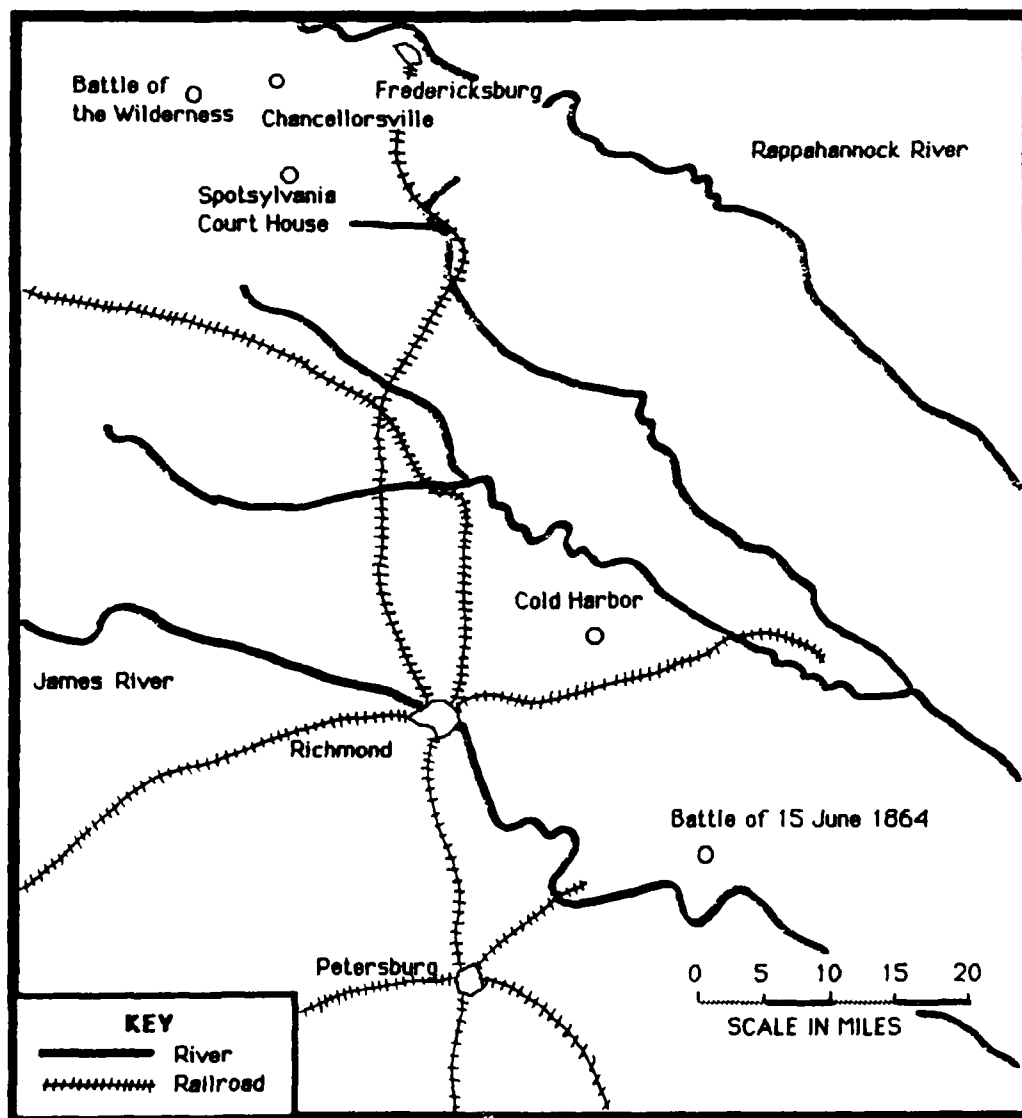


FIGURE 8
RICHMOND AND VICINITY, SPRING 1864

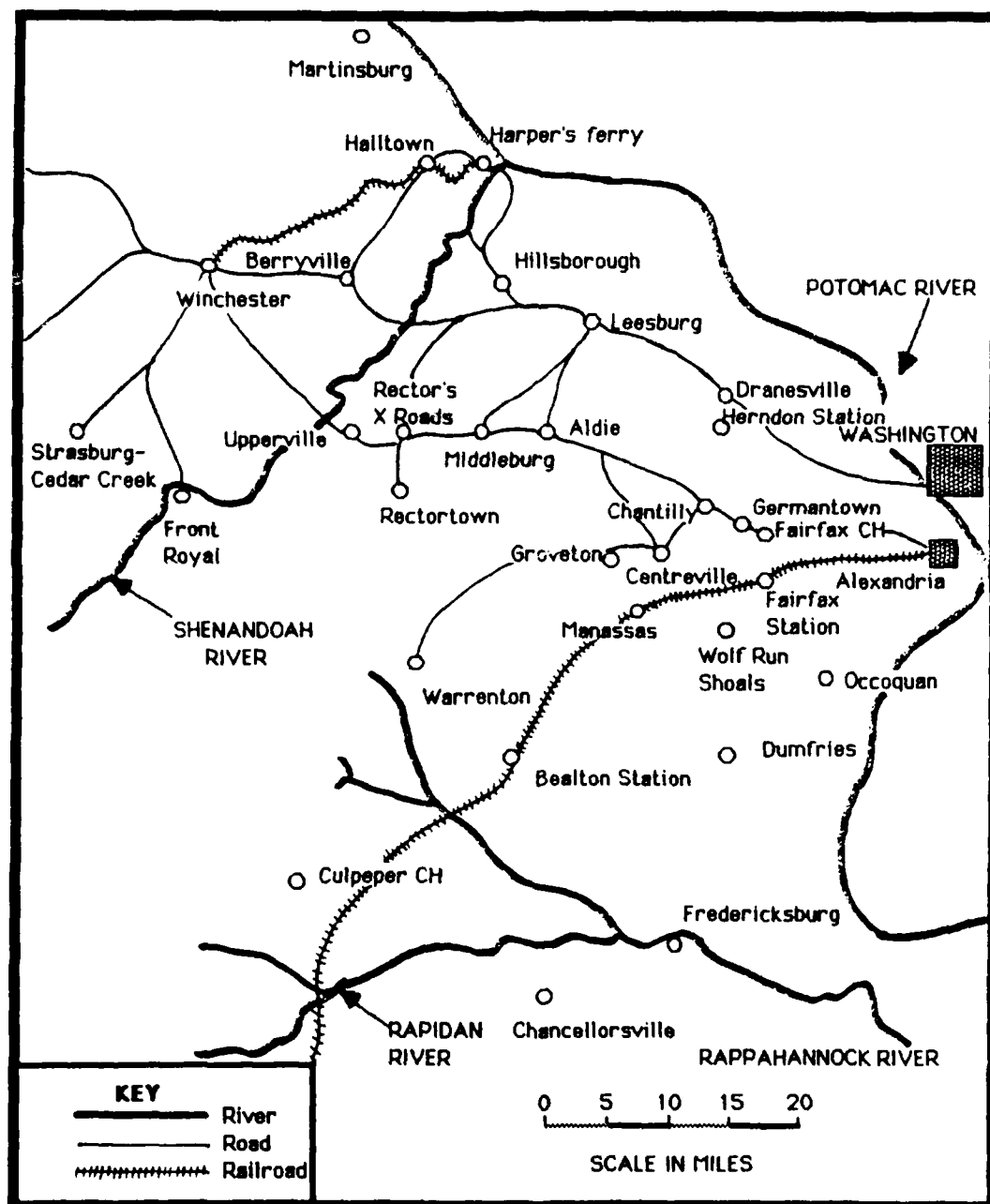


FIGURE 9
NORTHERN VIRGINIA, SUMMER 1864

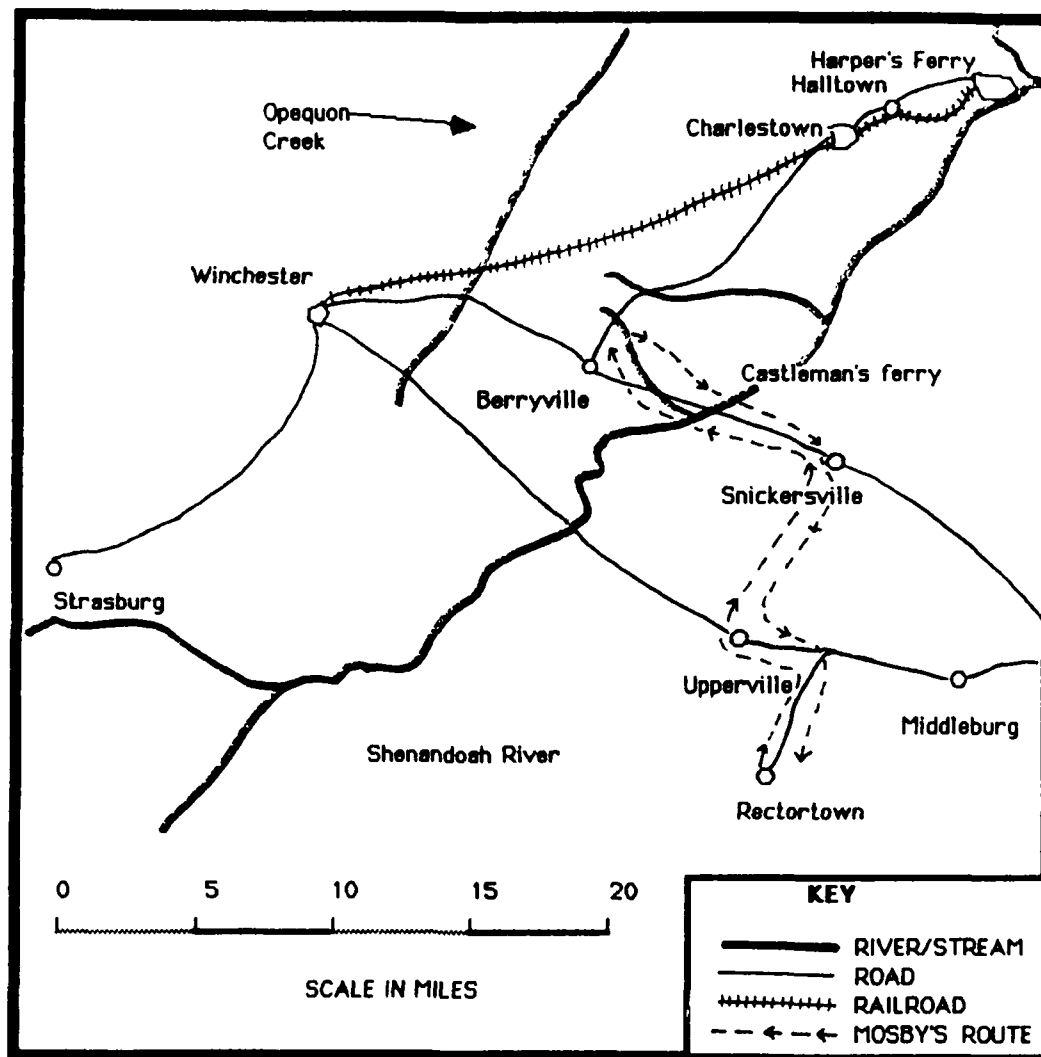


FIGURE 10
BERRYVILLE, VIRGINIA, AUGUST 1864

CHAPTER 4

SECTION 1

ANALYSIS

The previous chapters of this study described John S. Mosby's life and three of his unit's offensive operations, the Fairfax raid, the Loudoun Heights attack, and the Berryville raid. This chapter analyzes and discusses the information from those chapters and concludes with a statement of findings. The analysis is organized into the following categories:

1. SITUATION AND ORGANIZATION.
2. MISSION AND PLANNING.
3. EXECUTION OF THE OPERATIONS.
4. EQUIPMENT AND LOGISTICS.
5. COMMUNICATIONS, COMMAND, AND CONTROL.
6. RESULTS.
7. THE ELEMENT OF CHANCE.
8. LEADERSHIP.

1. SITUATION AND ORGANIZATION. Union forces, in the first two operations, temporarily occupied defensive positions as a result of the harsh winter weather. The Federal army was, however, superior to the Confederate army in numbers and resources, and when spring arrived, it resumed offensive operations. The Union's situation at the time of the

Berryville raid was different in that it was already into a summer offensive.

The Federal army occupied the "enemy" territory of Virginia in all three operations. This subjected the Union to the disadvantages of exposed lines of communication and of fighting in unfriendly or, at least, unsympathetic regions. As a result, it was constantly vulnerable to attacks on its supply lines and to intelligence gathering efforts from Confederate spies and sympathizers. In order to alleviate the problems caused by these disadvantages, the Union army stationed guard forces in various locations and also employed escorts as a means of securing its lines of communication. Obviously, the best infantry and cavalry units would be used in combat, and the inexperienced and inferior units would be used as guards and escorts. This does not imply that all the guard and escort forces were composed of inferior units, but rather that the routine missions of the less capable units were guard and escort. For example, the Ohio National Guard was composed of units of "100 days' men." The Union commander would have been foolhardy to send these inexperienced and relatively untrained soldiers against the hardened and battlewise soldiers of the Confederacy. Nevertheless, it would be wise to use them to replace the more experienced units in performing the less dangerous operations, such as guard and escort.

The Union's soldiers' levels of experience and professionalism varied in the same manner as the levels of the units did. Some soldiers joined the army to fight for the Union's cause, some joined because it was a means of employment, and others joined because they were forced or coerced. When a

Union soldier was captured by the Confederate cavalry in the first two years of the war, that soldier could be sent to prison or be given a parole. The former meant that he would be subjected to the notoriously bad conditions of prison life--in some cases it was a fate worse than death. The latter meant that legally, he could no longer fight for the Union.

The consequences of the parole also meant that the war was over for the parolee and he could return to his home and family. Obviously this was appealing to some of the less professional Union soldiers and it provided the Confederates with an important advantage. The Union soldier would be less likely to risk his life resisting a Confederate attack when he knew that instead of dying or going to prison, he could be going home. Examples of this situation were evident in the raids on Fairfax Court House and Herndon Station when most of the Union soldiers quickly *surrendered rather than* resist. Additionally, the Confederates used the promise of a parole as a bargaining tool in order to get the prisoner to divulge important information about his unit.

In 1863, this situation changed when the Confederate cavalry was forbidden to grant paroles to prisoners except those who were wounded. This meant that the Union soldier's resistance to capture was greater because he knew he no longer had the option of a parole. It also meant that the Confederates lost one of their previous advantages. An example of this situation was evident in the attack on Loudoun Heights. The Union soldiers were surrounded and their opportunity for escape was slight. If they had had the opportunity for parole, they may have given up thinking that their situation was hopeless. Instead, Cole's cavalrymen knew they faced death,

prison, or both and, as a result, resisted the attackers as well as the freezing weather.

The fact that a wounded soldier could receive a parole, did provide the Confederates with an illegal opportunity to get information about enemy units. They could bargain with the prisoner for information by assuring him that if the information he provided was sufficiently valuable, they would declare that he was "wounded" and give him a parole. Although the historical records do not demonstrate examples where this occurred, the opportunity obviously existed. Regardless of the methods that Mosby's men used, the fact was that even after the parole system was abolished, they continued to receive valuable information from prisoners.

The Berryville raid demonstrated another reason for the lack of Union resistance. The infantry men escorting Sheridan's wagon train were "100 days' men" with less than a week of Federal service remaining. They were, as a general rule, less professional, less experienced, and less motivated than their regular army contemporaries. Furthermore, they were more concerned with returning home in one hundred days than fulfilling their obligation to protect the train. As a result, their poor performance during the raid allowed Mosby's mounted rangers to defeat a stronger infantry force.

The Union forces, in all three operations, were caught unprepared as a result of poor battlefield discipline. In the Fairfax raid, Brig. Gen. Stoughton's troops, well behind the cavalry picket line, believed they were secure from enemy attack. They had not established a password and were not as alert as they should have been. In the Loudoun Heights attack, Cole's

battalion had not established guard posts around their camp because they believed the frigid weather, the snow, and the height of the mountain prevented attack. Finally, in the Berryville raid, the Union escorts believed they were secure from attack because of their location behind friendly lines and the fact that their force was so large. The Confederates had an advantage over the Union in these operations because they could choose the time and the manner of attack. In order to offset the Confederate advantage, the Union would have had to maintain its discipline at all times because it did not know nor could it choose when the enemy would attack.

The Union's ability to maintain its discipline and security was also more difficult due the weather conditions and the time the attacks took place. In both winter operations, the attacks occurred between two and five o'clock in the morning while the weather was cold and snowing or raining. In these two cases, the environmental conditions were major factors in causing the Union's security to be either very lax or nonexistent. In addition to the first two operations, the environmental conditions of haze and mist helped to obscure Mosby's position while he prepared for the Berryville attack. Furthermore, he conducted his reconnaissance during the two to five o'clock time frame when Union security was most vulnerable.

Mosby used the weather to his advantage. He knew that the weather conditions could interfere with his operations, but he also knew that initiative and surprise were on his side. Therefore, the weather would be a greater hinderance to the enemy than to his own unit.

In addition to the weather, Mosby also used terrain to his advantage. In the first two operations, he selected routes into the enemy's area of

operations that would protect his troops. In the Fairfax raid, he used the woods to obscure his movement and the flooded Cub Run to delay any pursuit. In the raid on Cole's camp, he climbed Loudoun Heights by using a trail that the Union troops believed impossible to negotiate. In the Berryville raid, Mosby selected the best vantage points to locate his artillery and launch his attack.

Not only did Mosby know the terrain, but he also gained as much information about the enemy as he could. When he captured Brig. Gen. Stoughton, Mosby used spies, deserters, prisoners, and personal reconnaissance to determine as much information as possible about the enemy's situation. In the attack on Loudoun Heights, Mosby used scouts from another unit and his own reconnaissance to learn about Cole's Camp. Finally, when he attacked the wagon train, he again used scouts and his own reconnaissance to find out the train's route and the location of its rest halt.

The partisan ranger commander employed an excellent intelligence system which allowed him to decide which mission he would conduct. As a result, he and his men rarely roamed the area "in force" searching for targets of opportunity. Normally, a scout would provide the preliminary information about a vulnerable Union force. Then Mosby would organize his men and move them to an assembly area. He would reconnoiter the area, select the manner of attack, and after rejoining his men, he would lead the operation.

Intelligence was very important for the partisan unit's effectiveness because it had a small margin for error. If it had used faulty intelligence, not only would the operation have been in jeopardy, but the future of the

unit would have been at stake. If the unit made a large blunder, it could quickly cease to exist. Intelligence was also more readily available to the partisans concerning Federal unit locations, strengths, and plans. This was due to the normal operations of the press and the various informal communications networks. Also, as Mosby's unit grew in size, it also grew in intelligence gathering capability. Andrew M. Scott writes in his book, Insurgency:

Intelligence yield and popular support are often closely linked. As popular support for a movement rises, the flow of intelligence is likely to increase. If popular support declines, there is likely to be a decline in the amount and quality of the intelligence available.¹

Mosby had noticed this situation early in his partisan career when he wrote Gen. Stuart about the local populace desiring him to remain in the area as a partisan. Mosby recognized the importance of receiving support of the population. For example, when his men were off duty, they were mostly scattered throughout the area, living and working for civilian families and farms. If his men did not receive the support of the locals, his unit could be refused shelter, food, new recruits, medicine, intelligence, and forage.

Mosby also realized the importance of his civil-military relationship and conducted his operations similarly to those outlined by Carl von Decker, a German expert of partisan warfare, who wrote in 1822:

The partisan must be welcome everywhere; to this end, he will maintain strict discipline in this band and will know how to present himself in a disinterested guise. He should be able to have the elements to fulfill his needs brought to him without having to take them; but when he must requisition them, he will ensure that

¹Andrew M. Scott, Insurgency, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1970), p. 57.

everything is paid for in ready money so that he is not classed with freebooters. The country should consider him its liberator, shielding it from enemy vexation, and gratefully offer him its best.²

If Mosby had not maintained his excellent rapport with the civilians, he would have had more situations like the one in 1864 where the Southern businessman helped Union soldiers capture some of Mosby's men.

The ranger leader could not maintain this rapport by himself, his men also had to help him support his civil-military operations. If one or two of his men would have mistreated civilians, the reputation of the entire unit could have suffered the repercussions. This meant that Mosby's men had to be sufficiently disciplined to follow his rules and not adversely affect the unit's civil-military relations.

Mosby's men did not have the same type of discipline or organization as the more conventional units did. Most units would have thought the 43d Battalion was totally undisciplined and in some cases they were right. One of Mosby's own men writes:

The truth is, we were an undisciplined lot. During the twelve months of my service I learned but four commands--fall in and count off by fours, march, close up, and charge. There was another movement with which we were not altogether unfamiliar, an order technically known as the "skedaddle," but I never heard the command given. The Rangers seemed to know instinctively when that movement was appropriate, and never waited for the word.³

²Carl von Decker, "Der Kleine Krieg im Geiste der neueren Kriegsführung," in Walter Laqueur, The Guerrilla Reader, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977), p. 59.

³John H. Alexander, Mosby's Men, (New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1907), p. 19

They were undisciplined by conventional armies' standards but this was not a conventional army. The Confederate battalion demonstrated its own type of discipline in all three operations. The Fairfax raid was characterized by quiet, obedient soldiers who would follow their leader without question. When the raiders entered the village of Fairfax Court House, Mosby gave them instructions and they obeyed. The operation would have been impossible without discipline. The Loudoun Heights raid was similar in that the soldiers rode for hours in zero degree weather, maintained silence, climbed a snowy cliff when told, and did all this without knowing what their mission was. In the Berryville raid, the two squadrons of rangers waited within sight of the enemy until three rounds of artillery were fired. All these demonstrate a measure of discipline, but it is still different from that of conventional forces. As Andrew M. Scott explains:

Insurgent movements typically place less emphasis on the formalities of military courtesy than do conventional forces.

Discipline depends less on formal obligations and fear of punishment and more on morale, devotion to the cause, camaraderie, and peer group reinforcement.

Insurgent movements lack the involved bureaucratic apparatus and procedures that support discipline in most conventional forces. Insurgency enforcement of discipline is likely to be characterized by informality, flexibility, speed, and harshness.⁴

All the rangers knew that if they misbehaved, they would be barred from the unit and sent to the regular army. They considered this to be the harshest punishment of all, as Ranger John Munson wrote:

⁴Scott, Insurgency, p. 12.

Mosby would not permit any man to commit a crime, or even a misdemeanor, in his domain. One of our men, in a spirit of deviltry, once turned over an old Quaker farmer's milk cans, and when Mosby heard of it he ordered me to take the man over to the army, which was then near Winchester, and turn him over to General Early, with the message that such a man was not fitted to be a guerrilla.⁵

The level of discipline in Mosby's battalion did not compare with that of conventional units. For example, when a conventional army conducted a frontal assault, the assaulting soldier did so as a result of strict discipline. Mosby's unit did not have that level of discipline. This was demonstrated during the Loudoun Heights attack when many of the rangers did not charge the Union camp as ordered.

The only way Mosby and his subordinate leaders could approach the level of discipline found in conventional units was to lead by example and reward bravery. All the operations shown in this study demonstrated that Mosby and his subordinate leaders led from the front and set the example. Ranger Munson agrees, "Every man in Mosby's command understood that he was expected to follow his Commander without question, and the result was a blind unwavering faith in their leader."⁶ Mosby rewarded bravery by bestowing rank or deciding who received the most spoils at the conclusion of an operation.⁷

The 43d Battalion was composed of men from varied walks of life with only a few things in common: they volunteered, they were brave, and they followed their leaders. They were divided into small companies of sixty men, and each had a commander and subordinate officers. Mosby did not end

⁵Munson, Reminiscences of a Mosby Guerrilla, p. 22.

⁶Ibid, p. 6-7, (*italics mine*).

⁷Ibid, p. 9; Jones, Ranger Mosby, p. 75.

could not require all his men to muster at the same time. As a result, the commander never really knew how many men he would get when he called a meeting. The battalion meetings were called at random locations and they usually experienced acceptable attendance because all the men were volunteers. None of the operations described how the partisan unit trained, and there was little training by conventional standards. One training exercise they did employ was to gallop past a tree at full speed, and fire three bullets into its trunk in succession.⁸

2. MISSION AND PLANNING. The three operations demonstrated that Mosby's overall mission was to harass the enemy's supply lines and communications and, by doing so, force the enemy to divert substantial numbers of troops from the front lines to rear area and population control. The 43d Battalion did this by carrying off or destroying munitions, supplies, clothing, horses, mules, and cattle; by killing, wounding, or capturing enemy soldiers; by seizing provisions that the enemy had to bring up from far in his rear and that he could not find near the battle area; by seizing enemy dispatches and cutting communications; by capturing generals; and by passing on or seeking out important information about the enemy. Mosby's theory of action was, "A line is only as strong as its weakest point, it was necessary for it to be stronger than I was at every point in order to resist my attacks."⁹

Mosby operated under Gen. Stuart, until his death, and then under Gen. Robert E. Lee. Both leaders permitted him to use his own discretion and rarely interfered with his operations. In the three operations, Mosby only

⁸Munson, Reminiscences of a Mosby Guerrilla, pp. 24-25.

⁹Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, p. 26.

conferred with his superior about one mission, the Fairfax raid. In that situation, Mosby wrote to Stuart that he was thinking about a raid into Fairfax and Stuart urged him to try. Mosby had carte blanche because he was successful and because he was too far away for either of his superiors to control him.

All three of the operations were planned in advance, and at least two were planned to be decisive, all-or-nothing, operations. In the Fairfax raid, the mission was to capture Col. Wyndham and others and escape without firing a shot. In the Loudoun Heights attack, Mosby's plan was to capture Cole's entire battalion without a shot. In both cases, Mosby did not have an alternate plan of action. Mosby always made preliminary plans, but rarely finalized them until he was at the scene of the operation. He also did not tell his men what the mission was going to be until they arrived at their destination. When Mosby's men stopped at the town square in Fairfax Court House, he gave them their instructions. When he arrived at the top of Loudoun Heights, he personally reconnoitered the camp and then issued his first instructions of the operation. Perhaps Mosby acquired these ideas from reading Napoleon's Maxims. For example, one of these maxims states, "I never had a plan of operations."¹⁰ Napoleon implied that he was never dominated by a hard and fast plan worked out in advance. He also had "a deliberate desire to keep contemporaries, even the marshalate, in the dark."¹¹ Furthermore, Mosby's desire to conduct the decisive battle or operation was probably based on Napoleon's strategy of the decisive battle

¹⁰David G. Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1966), p. 134.

¹¹Ibid.

It should be noted, however, that Mosby's desire was no different than that of most other Civil War leaders.

Mosby's personality also affected his mission planning. For example, the Fairfax raid occurred as a direct result of Mosby's desire for revenge against Col. Wyndham.

3. EXECUTION OF THE OPERATIONS. All of Mosby's operations were characterized by simple mission orders, decentralized execution, surprise, stealth, speed, and audacity. The first and last operations employed deception and the last operation used a coordinated attack. All of Mosby's operations employed hit-and-run tactics, avoided frontal or positional warfare, and employed operational security.

The successful deception techniques included the wearing of gum coats, which helped to conceal the ranger's identity; identifying oneself as a Union soldier; approaching the enemy from behind its own lines; departing the scene of an operation in a different direction than the actual exit route; and telling a prisoner lies in order to destroy his hope for rescue.

The Berryville raid employed artillery, a reserve, and two attack squadrons. Mosby combined four of his companies into two squadrons as a method of centralizing the control of his forces. This was significant and demonstrated the evolution of Mosby's command style. When Mosby conducted his Fairfax raid, he controlled twenty-nine men on his own, he first told his men about the mission when they were close to entering the village, and he selected his leaders and assigned their tasks while they were in the village. In the Loudoun Heights attack, Mosby controlled over one hundred men, told his men about the mission when they had entered the

enemy's camp, assigned three small missions to subordinate leaders, but still retained the bulk of the force under his control. The Loudoun Heights attack taxed Mosby's span of control and taught him that large groups of men are difficult for one man to control, especially in the dark. After that unsuccessful mission, Mosby never again conducted night raids with large forces. In the Berryville raid, Mosby combined his forces, explained the operation's purpose, and delegated almost all of his control to his subordinate leaders.

Operational security was paramount to the success and existence of Mosby's battalion. Andreas Emmerich, an 18th century German partisan, outlined the requirement for operational security when he wrote in 1790

... [the partisans] are more unsettled and exacting than those of any other kind of troops, as they are never encumbered with tents and as the security of the army largely depends upon their vigilance.

Conversely, if the partisan ever allows himself to be taken by surprise, he has no excuse. He may of course be attacked, even cut to pieces, but he must never, either in the field or in his quarters let himself be taken by surprise. . . .¹²

Another technique of the 43d battalion was that it avoided confrontation with the enemy when conditions were not favorable for success or when it did not pertain to the conduct of the present operation. In all three operations, but especially in the Loudoun Heights attack, the rangers broke contact with the enemy instead of trying to maintain it. Finally, all operations were executed with the objective of conserving the rangers' lives.

¹²Andreas Emmerich, "Der Parteigänger im Kreig," in Walter Laqueur, The Guerrilla Reader, p. 24.

4. EQUIPMENT AND LOGISTICS. Logistics, to a unit operating at a distance from its own army, is vital to its survival. Because of its clandestine nature, the 43d Battalion usually had to find its own means of existence. It could not risk using complicated supply operations, or using commercial channels such as trains for bulk freight. It survived, for the most part, on supplies from the local farmers and from equipment and supplies from the enemy. James Williamson, one of Mosby's men, explains their situation:

Mosby's command was regularly organized under the Partizan Ranger Law, an act passed by the Confederate Congress, they were allowed the benefit of the law applying to Maritime prizes. All cattle and mules were turned over to the Confederate Government, but horses captured were distributed among the men making the capture. When it is borne in mind that the men had to arm, equip and support themselves, this did not leave a very heavy surplus, as we received but little aid from the government.¹³

The items needed by the partisan included: good horses, four pistols, munitions, clothing, medical supplies, food, shelter, and forage for the horses. The rangers' horses came almost exclusively from the Union. There were, however, good horses and bad horses. The Union officers usually had better mounts than the enlisted ranks and, as demonstrated in the Fairfax raid, the partisans always placed high priority on raiding the officer's stables.

The partisans usually used four Union pistols, two carried at their waist and two in their saddle holsters, because they did not want to charge into the enemy and then have to stop in order to reload. The Berryville raid provides a good example of how the rangers used their pistols to attack

¹³Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, p. 22.

infantrymen in the open. Mosby's men charged as fast as their horses could run, averaging one hundred yards in less than ten seconds. They drew attention to themselves by yelling and screaming as loudly as possible. The enemy had time to fire a few volleys from their muskets but hitting the rapidly closing rangers with the heavy musket was difficult. The rangers began their charge from seventy-five to three hundred yards away. This was important because the musket was usually sighted for targets at three to five hundred yards away, causing a large disparity between line of sight and the rifled musket's bullet trajectory.¹⁴ Furthermore, aiming at the rapidly charging horseman while standing in open terrain required the steady nerves of a hardened veteran. Once the infantryman had fired and missed, he had to try to reload and shoot again using a different aiming point. Considering this, it is easy to understand why bullets from vulnerable infantrymen often missed their targets and why only a few rangers were wounded.

Additionally, when the ranger was at close quarters with the infantryman, he could easily fire each pistol six times and use his horse to run the enemy over. Meanwhile, the infantryman could only fire one round, reload, and try to quickly raise the heavy musket into position for another close-in shot. When the ranger had expended his twenty-four rounds, he either had the situation well in hand or had to withdraw to reload. Therefore, the twenty-four rounds became the determining factor for the duration of the operation.

The partisans often acquired their clothing and medical supplies as a result of their raids. The only uniform requirement for the Confederate

¹⁴Coggins, Arms and Equipment of the Civil War, pp. 38-39.

rangers was that something they wore had to be gray. Consequently, the remainder of the ranger's uniform usually looked more "blue" than "gray."

Shelter for Mosby's men often translated into farm houses, barns, or blankets in open fields. Interestingly, one ranger usually selected his camp in a cemetery because Union soldiers seldom looked there.

Forage for horses was both an individual and group responsibility. Often times, the rangers formed details with the mission of supplying forage through local purchase, confiscation, or by raiding Union supplies.

The equipment for Mosby's unit was different from other cavalry units because the rangers rarely carried sabres or carbines. James Williamson explains why:

In the stillness of the night the clanking of the sabres and the rattle of the carbines striking against the saddles could be heard for a great distance, and would often betray us when moving cautiously in the vicinity of the Federal camps. We sometimes passed between camps but a few hundred yards apart.¹⁵

5. COMMUNICATIONS, COMMAND AND CONTROL. The communication system for Mosby's unit depended almost entirely on civilian or military couriers and was a secure, but slow means of passing information. Although Mosby reported the results of his Berryville raid to his superiors by telegraph, he did not normally have the opportunity to do so because his unit was usually in enemy territory. The Berryville raid also demonstrated that Mosby used a cannon as a means of communicating the start of the attack to his subordinates.

Some factors of command and control, such as leaders setting the example, were mentioned earlier. The key technique was that Mosby always

¹⁵Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, p. 21.

selected a vantage point where he could best control the operation and his subordinate leaders did likewise.

Mosby overcame the Confederate's poor system of officer election by selecting his leaders and then telling his men to vote for them. But, he always gave the enlisted men the opportunity to move to a different company or leave the battalion if they did not approve of his selections.

6. RESULTS. The results of Mosby's operations were the same as the objectives he outlined in the following:

... to destroy supply trains, to break up the means of conveying intelligence and thus isolating an army from its base, as well as its different corps from each other, to confuse plans by capturing dispatches, are the objects of partisan warfare. . . . The military value of a partisan's work is not measured by the amount of property destroyed, or the number of men killed or captured, but by the number he keeps watching. Every soldier withdrawn from the front to guard the rear of an army is so much taken from its fighting strength.¹⁶

The results of Mosby's operations had both political and psychological effects on the Union: the Fairfax raid drew comments and actions from every level of Federal leadership, to include the President; the Loudoun Heights attack resulted in a commendation for Cole's battalion from General-in-Chief Halleck, and the Berryville raid resulted in Sheridan's army withdrawing from the Shenandoah Valley and drawing reactions from many senior leaders including General-in-Chief Grant.

The effects of the partisan units on the Confederate army were not always positive. The infantry and regular cavalry were jealous of the "freedom of the life of the Partisan Ranger in contrast with the dull routine

¹⁶Burr, The Life of Gen. Philip H. Sheridan, p. 315.

and more rigid discipline of camp life."¹⁷ The regulars sometimes vented their feelings by antagonizing the rangers with the call of "Carpet Knights" or "Feather-bed soldiers."

There were also Confederate officers, who opposed partisan operations, and they were successful in persuading the Confederacy to abolish all partisan units except Mosby's and McNeill's. Regardless of these officers' opinions, Mosby's actions over the period January 1863 to August 1864 demonstrated a considerable contribution to the Confederate cause: over 118 Union soldiers killed, an unknown number wounded, over 1,157 prisoners, and over 2,200 horses, mules, or cattle captured. Gen. Robert E. Lee indirectly acknowledged Mosby's worth to the Confederacy by complimenting or commending him more often in his official papers than he did any other subordinate.¹⁸

Other than Mosby's and McNeill's units, partisan units in general had reputations as robbers, looters and brigands

7. THE ELEMENT OF CHANCE. Chance played an important part in each of Mosby's operations. With the exception of Mosby's desire for the decisive battle and his reluctance to inform his men of each operation's purpose, he usually had the element of chance in his favor.

Mosby's quest for the "all-or-nothing" operation caused his plans to be inflexible and required him to depend, to a great degree, on chance for success. The Loudoun Heights attack provides an excellent example of the disastrous results that can occur with an inflexible plan that depends too

¹⁷Williamson, Mosby's Rangers, pp. 19-20.

¹⁸Jones, Ranger Mosby, p. viii.

heavily on chance. Ironically, one of Napoleon's maxims specifically said, "... chance alone can never bring success."¹⁹

Usually, Mosby's reluctance to keep his men informed about the purpose of the operation did not prove disastrous, although it could have had that result. For example, the Fairfax raid would never have taken place if the two separated columns of rangers had not rejoined by chance.

In most situations, Mosby placed chance in his favor. He did this through good security; by concealing his strength and intentions; by using deception, surprise, stealth, and speed; and by using careful foresight and thorough planning. Furthermore, Mosby possessed the character traits needed to effectively cope with chance. He could make rapid and accurate decisions, he was determined, and he possessed presence of mind. Both the Fairfax and the Berryville raids were successful because Mosby had taken steps to reduce the impact that chance might have on the operation.

8. LEADERSHIP. Mosby's character and personal leadership traits were key to the success of his unit. In the first two operations, Mosby led his men through miserable weather and they followed without question. Furthermore, they had no idea where or why they were going, but it did not matter, so long as Mosby was leading. On the Fairfax raid, when the two ranger columns were separated in the woods, Mosby's men decided to try to advance in the rain and snow rather than turn back. Why did his men do these things? Because Mosby was a good leader, and they trusted him.

Mosby earned his men's respect for the following reasons: (1) he was successful, and his soldiers easily related to success; (2) he was honorable

¹⁹Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon, p. 146.

and virtuous, his men never questioned his integrity; (3) he was technically proficient in scouting and fighting, and he never asked any of his men to do anything that he would not also do; (4) he trusted his men and looked out for their well being; (5) he led from the most dangerous point on the battlefield, the front; (6) he would use his small physique to challenge the larger men to equal his feats of daring; (7) he used his piercing eyes to enforce his instructions; (8) he was intelligent; (9) his iron will and resolve could bully and inspire his men into giving him their blind obedience; (10) he knew his men's strengths, their weaknesses, and what appealed to them; (11) he demonstrated fearlessness and perserverence; and (12) his leadership style was personalized, charismatic, and nonbureaucratic

Mosby acquired his leadership abilities in a number of ways. A number of his traits--such as aggression, integrity, perseverance, his physical stature and his piercing eyes--were results of nature and his environment. Some traits were learned from his superiors, such as JEB Stuart and Grumble Jones. Others were acquired from books, such as Napoleon's Maxims. Finally, Mosby developed many of his leadership traits through practical experience, after making mistakes on the job.

CHAPTER 4

SECTION 2

CONCLUSION

This study has provided historical accounts of the Civil War's most effective partisan leader, John S. Mosby, and three of his major tactical operations. It has also identified, discussed, and analyzed the situations and circumstances that he and his Union opponents faced, the techniques he used to be successful, and the lessons he and his enemies learned.

The discussion and analysis of Mosby's life, from his birth in 1833 until the Berryville raid in August 1864, and his unit's operations provided the following:

1. It analyzed Mosby's character and showed how his insecurity affected his motivation and leadership.
2. It used logical deduction and theories to fill historical gaps caused by the absence of historical documentation.
3. It provided reasons why some historical events, such as the battle of Cedar Mountain, occurred.
4. It combined the piecemeal accounts of the three operations from several historical references into a single account of each operation.
5. It provided information about other Civil War personnel and how they were involved with the three operations.

6. It described and analyzed the evolution and growth of the 43d Battalion, Virginia Cavalry from January 1863 until August 1864

7. It described and analyzed the results and effects that the three operations had on both the Union and the Confederacy.

This study also discussed the techniques that the partisans used in their operations, the lessons learned by both the Union and Confederacy, the effects of the element of chance, and the leadership traits of John S. Mosby. The most apparent of these are condensed into the following list:

1. TACTICS and STRATEGY.

a. An army is more vulnerable to partisan activities when it occupies regions that are generally unsympathetic to its cause.

b. Rear area guard forces are usually less experienced, motivated, and professional than front line combat forces. As a result, they are more vulnerable to the effects of partisan activities. Furthermore, that vulnerability increases if the army's rear area occupies unsympathetic regions.

c. Partisan units have the advantage of initiative because they decide the time and place of attack.

d. Adverse weather has a greater negative impact on a conventional force's security, morale, and alertness than on those of a partisan force. As a result, the conventional force is more vulnerable to partisan activities during adverse weather conditions. Furthermore, adverse weather favors the partisan by obscuring his activities from observation.

e. Partisan units will use the most obscure and difficult routes available to penetrate a conventional force's defensive perimeter.

f. Partisans conduct preplanned operations as a result of information they receive about the enemy situation. They do not usually roam the countryside in large groups looking for targets of opportunity.

g. The partisan unit must acquire a level of discipline that will allow it to employ stealth, surprise, speed, and audacity in its operations.

h. Partisan units use prearranged rendezvous points as a means of passing information and organizing for operations.

i. The partisan unit's purpose is to harass the enemy in order to cause him to divert combat forces from the front.

j. A partisan operation in the Civil War was characterized by simple mission orders, hit-and-run tactics, surprise, stealth, speed, deception, and audacity.

k. A partisan unit is capable of massing its forces for a conventional, coordinated attack when the situation favors such action.

l. The successful partisan only fights while the situation is favorable; he breaks off the conflict when the situation becomes unfavorable.

m. The partisan takes advantage of conditions that makes his enemy's weapons least effective.

n. Partisan operations can have the potential to physically and psychologically affect all levels of the enemy's government.

o. Mosby planned his operations in advance as thoroughly as possible.

2. ORGANIZATION

a. All partisan rangers were volunteers, handpicked by the partisan leader.

b. A partisan's activities may not always be acceptable to his own government.

3. COMMAND AND CONTROL

a. By definition, partisan units are detached from regular army units, and the commander of the regular army unit is usually in the partisan leader's chain of command. In Mosby's case, however, the ties between his unit and Lee's were very loose and Mosby usually had carte blanche in conducting his operations.

b. The Civil War partisan depended heavily upon couriers for communications.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MOTIVATION

a. The option of giving a parole provided the Confederacy with a strong interrogation tool and was also an incentive for Union soldiers to surrender.

b. A soldier's resistance increases when the option of receiving a parole is removed.

c. State militia, who were only required to serve one hundred days of active service (100 days' men), became less motivated in performing their duties as they drew closer to the end of their service obligation.

d. Successful partisan leaders compensate for the shortage of discipline by setting the example and leading from the front.

e. Partisan leaders used promotions in rank and the distribution of spoils as rewards for bravery.

f. Initially, Mosby kept his men uninformed about the specifics of a pending operation. This supported operational security, but adversely affected his men's potential to use their own initiative.

g. Some of operations conducted by Mosby were a direct result of his desire for personal vengeance.

h. Large numbers of partisans are difficult to control at night. The situation calls for more planning time, closer supervision, and a greater dependence on subordinate leaders than during the day. Consequently, large partisan unit operations are more successful in daylight.

i. Soldiers are the partisan unit's most valuable resource, their conservation takes priority over all other objectives.

j. Mosby circumvented the Confederate army's officer election system by selecting his own officers. His unit's subsequent successes vindicated his actions.

k. The partisan leader is responsible for the unit's reputation. Its reputation can vary from that of being liberators to being looters and bandits.

l. Men follow leaders who are successful.

m. Mosby gained his leadership techniques from the example of others, from books, and by learning from trial and error.

n. Leaders can learn military lessons from books.

o. A partisan leader must have the ability to gain and hold the support of many types of people.

5. INTELLIGENCE

- a. Intelligence is paramount to the partisan unit's survival
- b. Information about the enemy is more readily available to the partisan than to the conventional force
- c. The partisan leader will try to gain as much information about the enemy and terrain as possible. His means of information gathering include personal reconnaissance and the use of spies, scouts, prisoners of war, deserters, newspapers, and civilians
- d. As a partisan unit grows in size and success, it also receives proportional benefits in civilian cooperation and in intelligence gathering capabilities

6. LOGISTICS

- a. The majority of the equipment and supplies used by the partisan were acquired as a result of his forays against the enemy. He also received to a lesser degree, equipment and supplies from his regular army. Most of his food and forage came from the civilian population.
- b. The partisan's equipment tended to be lighter than that of the regular army and was more appropriate for the close-in fighting preferred by the partisan. The lighter equipment also aided the partisan's speed
- c. Partisan uniforms lacked uniformity and were often acquired from the enemy.

7. CIVIL AFFAIRS

a. In the case of the American Civil War, a partisan unit's existence depended on gaining and maintaining an excellent rapport with the civilian population.

b. Shelter for the partisans was usually provided by the civilians.

8. DISCIPLINE.

a. Discipline directly affects a unit's combat effectiveness.

b. Severe punishment to a Confederate partisan was his banishment from the partisan organization and transfer to a regular army unit.

c. The partisan unit must be sufficiently disciplined when dealing with the civilian population in order to prevent its alienation.

d. The type and amount of discipline in a partisan unit is different from that of a conventional unit.

9. CHANCE.

a. With all things equal, the element of chance favors neither the partisan unit nor the regular army unit.

b. The less flexible the plan or unit, the greater the potential for chance to interfere.

The above list and the previous chapters have provided answers to a portion of this study's research question, that is, What were the techniques that made Mosby and his men successful? As to the other portion of the question, Might any of these techniques merit attention today? the answer is yes. For example, during the Vietnam conflict, the U.S. Army learned that a soldier became less motivated in performing his duties as he drew nearer to the end of his tour of duty. The army should have learned that lesson

from the "100 days' men" in the Civil War. Another example was that the army initially had difficulty understanding how the Viet Cong operated. The Viet Cong were partisans, and they operated in many of the same ways of the Civil War partisans. The army could have looked at its own history to learn what it needed to know about partisans.

Most of the factors listed above are applicable to the U. S. Army in both conventional warfare and low intensity conflict, but the list is not all inclusive. Additionally, Mosby's leadership traits closely align with the army's leadership philosophy of "Be-Know-Do," and could be used in other studies on leadership. Likewise, the numerous examples of the effects of chance could also be used as a reference for other studies. Furthermore, there are many more lessons and techniques that could be identified in this study as well as in future related studies. *One purpose of this research was to lay a foundation for further study into partisan warfare, and it has done that.*

Another purpose of this study was to help the U.S. Army develop a doctrine of partisan employment. It has provided some of the background information that the army needs to help develop its doctrine, but more research is needed. Even more important, however, is the U.S. Army's reluctance to acknowledge partisan warfare. In the low intensity arena, the army has seemingly concentrated its efforts on counterinsurgency, and has virtually ignored insurgency, or partisan warfare. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, placed great stock in partisan warfare during World War II and intends to use it in the future. Moreover, the Soviets have been fighting against partisans in Afghanistan since 1979. Therefore, if the United

States wants to help Afghanistan or the partisans in Angola and Nicaragua, it needs to better understand how and why they fight.

Additionally, the threat of partisan warfare could be used to deter aggression. For example, the Soviet Union may be less likely to invade and occupy portions of Western Europe if it were certain that it would have to contend with strong partisan organizations.

Finally, the United States has not been threatened with an invasion or enemy occupation since the Civil War, but it would not be impossible for that situation to occur in the future. One of the ways it may have to defend itself is through partisan operations. As a result of these real and hypothetical situations, the U.S. Army should expand its focus to include partisan warfare. That way it can better understand and possibly utilize an old form of warfare that is still in use today.

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX I

EPILOGUE TO THE ATTACK ON LOUDOUN HEIGHTS

9-10 JANUARY 1864

The Life of Sheridan has a very interesting episode concerning Tom Paxton, the ranger abandoned in the snow at Loudoun Heights:

There were a thousand thrilling incidents connected with this barefooted fight on the mountains, in the snow, worth relating, and the conspicuous instances of almost unexampled bravery would include almost every man in the command. But there is one touching incident necessary to join the woof and warp of this narration.

When daylight broke upon the scene there was a young Confederate soldier lying upon the field with a fatal wound in the neck, near the jugular vein. He was not more than twenty years of age, and a boy in appearance as well as in years. . . . [A Union] officer . . . found him. He raised up the dying lad and asked him his name.

"My name is Paxton," replied the boy, in broken tones.

"My God! are you Mr. Paxton's son who lives at the cross-roads towards Waterville?" eagerly inquired the officer.

"I am," was the simple response.

The humane act of his father in 1862 was recalled, and, full of emotion, the officer picked the lad up, carried him to the hospital, laid him upon an easy couch, and summoned the doctor, who replied, petulantly:

"We can't care for those men until we look after our own wounded."

"But this boy must be cared for," said the officer; and in as few words as possible he told the story of 1862, when five of their men belonging to Cole's Cavalry lay wounded upon Paxton's farm at the cross-roads.

There was no more perleying, and the boy was at once carefully attended to, but he was beyond human aid. All that could be done for

him to ease his last moments, was done. All the command felt terribly as they themselves had suffered and were suffering, that this boy was entitled to every attention that could be shown him.

"I do this," said Mr. Paxton in 1862, when he assisted in taking the wounded men toward the river, "because I would want others to do the same by my boy, who is in the Confederate army, if he should be wounded."

The same officer and the same men who heard these words and received that favor, dealt the death-blow to that son. Yet his dying moments were made easier by them for the favor his father had done.¹

¹Burr, The Life of Sheridan, pp. 143-144.

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A personal narrative of what the author saw as a member of the 43d Battalion, Virginia Cavalry. In his preface, the author admitted that his perception of the occurrences may differ from that of other members of the unit. And, while the book provides techniques used in some of the 43d's operations, I had to remind myself that the author had written this book over 40 years after the operations had occurred.

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Written by a former intelligence officer in the U. S. Army who was fascinated by all forms of intelligence and spying. This book relates the exploits of the most famous Southern intelligence agents as well as the most obscure. The author's work was important to my study in that it demonstrated how Mosby used spies in his operations and, on the other hand, how Mosby and his men were used as spies.

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including interviews of Mosby's children, in preparation for writing this book. It is indexed and fairly well footnoted; however, the book's text includes quotations which are not footnoted, making me skeptical of their authenticity. The book was very helpful in providing both techniques of operation and background information.

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2. Government Documents.

U. S. War Department. The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. 128 vols. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901.

The Official Record contains copies of reports by commanders and staffs of both the Union and the Confederacy. In particular, I used the volumes that concern Mosby, as a partisan leader, and the 43d Battalion, Virginia Cavalry. These volumes numbered 25, 27, 29, 33, 37, 43, and 46. The Official Record provided firsthand information about the operations analyzed in my study.

3. Periodicals and Articles.

Civil War Times Illustrated. 23 vols. April 1962-February 1985.

This periodical contains essays, illustrations, and speeches on various aspects of the Civil War. Some volumes, numbers 1, 4, 5, and 13, include articles about Mosby and the 43d Battalion, Virginia Cavalry. I found them useful in providing both techniques of operation as well as background information.

Grant, Carl E. "Partisan Warfare, Model 1861-65." Military Review, November 1958, pp. 42-56.

The author, then a Colonel in the U. S. Army, wrote about the problems of the Union and the Confederacy in determining the legal rights of partisan rangers to conduct military operations in the Civil War. His article includes the evolution of the Union's codes of instruction of land warfare (later superseded in 1914 by the Rules of Land Warfare), and, among others, the value of Mosby's Partisan Rangers. The article was also useful as a source of background information on partisan warfare in general.

Jones, Virgil C. "The Problems of Writing About the Guerrillas." Military Affairs, Spring 1957, pp.21-25.

The author explains the problems he encountered in writing his book, Gray Ghosts and Rebel Raiders. He is also the author of Ranger Mosby. The author outlined some techniques that were beneficial to the conduct of my research. I would recommend the article to anyone interested in conducting research about guerrilla operations in the Civil War.